A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON REGENERATION.

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A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON REGENERATION.

JOHN iii. 3.

Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto him, Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.

INTRODUCTION.

THE condition on which miniſters of the goſpel hold their office, is extremely awful. "They muſt render an account unto God" of their fidelity to the ſouls committed to their charge. Their duty and danger, as ſervants of God, are jointly and ſtrongly expreſſ-

ed in the commiſſion given to the prophet Ezekiel. "Son of man, I have made thee a "watchman unto the houſe of Iſrael, therefore "hear the word of my mouth, and give them "warning from me. When I ſay unto the "wicked, thou ſhalt ſurely die; and thou giv-"eſt him not warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the "wicked from his wicked way to ſave his life; "the ſame wicked man ſhall die in his iniquity, "but his blood will I require at thine hand. "Yet, if thou warn the wicked, and he turn "not from his wickedneſs, nor from his wicked "way, he ſhall die in his iniquity: but thou "haſt delivered thy ſoul *."

It is natural for us, in ſuch a ſituation, to be often revolving in our minds this great and weighty truſt. It is at once our duty and intereſt, to conſider with all poſſible care, in what way we may have the eaſieſt and moſt effectual acceſs to the hearts of ſinners: what views of divine truth will be moſt convincing; what forms of addreſs will make the ſtrongeſt and moſt laſting impreſſion: in one word, how we may acquit ourſelves of our miniſtry, ſo as to be a "ſa-"vour of life unto life," to many of thoſe who hear us, and to "deliver our own ſouls" from the blood of thoſe that periſh.

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18, 19.

Such

Such, indeed, is the undeniable moment and importance of the truths of the goſpel, that I am often ready to think, it will be eaſy to ſet them in ſo clear and convincing a light, as no perſon of common underſtanding ſhall be able to reſiſt. I am often ready to ſay within myſelf, Surely, if they be warned, they will no more dare to ruſh on the thick boſſes of the Almighty's buckler: ſurely, the boldeſt ſinner muſt tremble at the thoughts of death, judgment and eternity, faſt approaching, and from which it is impoſſible to fly. But, when we ſee, how many are able to ſit unmoved under the moſt awful threatenings from the word of God, how many continue unchanged under the moſt alarming diſpenſations of Providence, our thoughts are immediately carried to the unſearchable depth of divine counſels; and we muſt ſay with our bleſſed Saviour, "Even "ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight*;" or with the apoſtle Paul, "But if our goſpel be "hid, it is hid to them that are loſt: in whom "the god of this world hath blinded the minds "of them that believe not, leſt the light of the "glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of "God, ſhould ſhine unto them †."

The ſecret counſel of the moſt High, however, though we muſt adore with reverence, it is impoſſible for us to comprehend. What influence

* Luke x. 21. † 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

this has upon the final ſtate of particular perſons, no man in the preſent life is, and probably no created being ſhall ever be, able fully to explain. This only we know, that it is not ſuch as to take away the guilt of ſin, or deſtroy the efficacy of means. A ſenſe of duty therefore conſtrains us to reſume the arduous and difficult raſk, intreating the aſſiſtance and bleſſing of God, under a firm, perſuaſion that he will hear the prayer of faith and make his own word "quick and powerful, "ſharper than any two edged ſword, piercing "even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, "and of the joints and the marrow, and a diſ-"cerner of the thoughts and intents of the "heart."

The ſubject I have made choice of, and intend to handle in the enſuing treatiſe, immediately regards the ſubſtance of religion, and is happily as little intangled in controverſy as any that could be named. We are told that "except "a man be born again, he cannot ſee the king-"dom of God." In this all parties, every profeſſion and denomination of chriſtians, do or ought to agree. By whatever name you are called, whatſoever leader you profeſs to follow, whatever ordinances you enjoy, if you are not "born again," you ſhall not enter into the kingdom of God.

That

That manner of preaching the goſpel, explaining or recommending divine truth, appears to me moſt profitable, which brings oftener into view, or, rather, never loſes view of the great and eſſential difference between believers and unbelievers, ſaints and ſinners, heirs of glory and heirs of hell. Theſe are mixed together on earth. They have common privileges as men and citizens. They cannot be certainly diſtinguiſhed by human obſervation; for though the image of God ſhines in a bright and ſenſible manner in ſome on the one hand, and ſome bear very plain and deadly ſymptoms on the other, whoſe ſtate may be determined with little hazard of miſtake; yet, in the intermediate degrees, there are multitudes whoſe real character is known only to God. What then can be ſaid more awakening, and, at the ſame time, more certainly true, than that every hearer of the goſpel, and every reader of ſuch a treatiſe as this, is either reconciled to God and the object of his love, or at enmity with God, having "neither "part nor portion" in his favour; and as many as die in this laſt condition, ſhall be the everlaſting monuments of divine wrath. How important a diſtinction! and can any man refrain from ſaying, "Lord! thou knoweſt all things—to which "of theſe claſſes do I belong?"

But there is ſomething, if poſſible, ſtill more preſſing in the paſſage of ſcripture which I have placed at the head of this diſcourſe. Not only are all men of two different and oppoſite characters now, but all men are originally of one character, unfit for the kingdom of God; unleſs a change has paſt upon them they continue ſo; and, unleſs a change do paſs upon them hereafter, they muſt be for ever excluded. This our Lord introduces with a ſtrong aſſeveration, and ſignal note of importance: "Verily, verily, I "ſay unto you, Except a man be born again, "he cannot ſee the kingdom of God." Theſe words were ſpoken to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This "maſter in Iſrael" came to Jeſus by night. Convinced he ſeems to have been of the power which attended his miniſtry, but, under a ſtill ſtronger attachment to his worldly intereſt, he durſt not openly avow his conviction. Our Lord, at once to enlighten his mind with the moſt ſalutary of all truths, and level his pride of underſtanding by the manner of conveying it, ſaith to him, "Except a man be born again, he "cannot ſee the kingdom of God." This appears to have been extremely aſtoniſhing, by his anſwer in the following verſe; "Nicodemus ſaith "unto him, How can a man be born when he "is old? Can he enter the ſecond time into his "mother's womb and be born?

It

It is not my purpoſe to give a tedious explication of the paſſage, or entertain the reader with a profuſion of criticiſm upon the words. This expreſſion, the kingdom of God, hath various ſignifications in ſcripture, but chiefly two in the New Teſtament; (1.) The goſpel-diſpenſation or government of the Meſſiah, as diſtinguiſhed from the preceding periods; (2.) The kingdom of heaven, where the ſincere diſciples of Chriſt ſhall be put in full poſſeſſion of the bleſſings of his purchaſe. I take it to be the laſt of theſe, that is, either only, or chiefly intended in this place. Both of them, indeed, may be be meant in their proper order, and for their different purpoſes. An open profeſſion, and receiving the external badge, was neceſſary to a concealed friend and cowardly diſciple; but a right to the ſpiritual privileges of the goſpel, and the promiſe of eternal life, was the only thing that could make the profeſſion valuable or deſirable. Accordingly our Saviour ſeems to ſpeak of both in his reply to Nicodemus's admiſſion into the viſible church by baptiſm, and renovation by the Holy Ghoſt. "Jeſus anſwered, Verily I ſay unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

I am ſenſible that regeneration or the new-birth is a ſubject, at preſent, very unfaſhionable; or, at leaſt, a ſtile of language which hath gone

very much into deſuetude. It is, however, a ſubject of unſpeakable moment, or, rather, it is the one ſubject in which all others meet as in a center. The grand enquiry, in compariſon of which every thing elſe, how excellent ſoever, is but ſpecious trifling. What doth it ſignify, tho' you have food to eat in plenty, and variety of raiment to put on, if you are not born again; if after a few mornings and evenings ſpent in unthinking mirth, ſenſuallity and riot, you die in your ſins and lie down in ſorrow? What doth it ſignify, though you are well accompliſhed in every other reſpect, to act your part in life, if you meet at laſt with this repulſe from the ſupreme Judge, "Depart from me, I know you "not, ye workers of iniquity."

If this ſubject is, indeed, unfaſhionable and neglected, we are miſerably deceiving ourſelves. If a new nature is neceſſary, to attempt to repair and new model the old will be found to be loſt labour. If the ſpring is polluted and continues ſo, what a vain and fruitleſs attempt it is to endeavour, by addition, or by foreign mixture, to purify the ſtreams. Juſt ſo it is by no means ſufficient, or, to ſpeak more properly, it is altogether impoſſible, to reform the irregularities and vicious lives of ſinners, and bring them to a real conformity to the law of God, till their hearts are renewed and changed. It is like rearing up an

old

old fabric, adding to its towers, and painting its walls, while the foundation is gone. See what the prophet Ezekiel ſays of ſuch fooliſh builders, "Woe to the fooliſh prophets—becauſe, "even becauſe they have ſeduced my people, "ſaying, Peace, and there was no peace; and "one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it "with untempered mortar: ſay unto them "which daub it with untempered mortar, that it "ſhall fall: there ſhall be an overflowing ſhow-"er, and ye, O great hailſtones, ſhall fall, and "a ſtormy wind ſhall rent it *."

But perhaps, the ſubſtance of the doctrine is retained while the language is held in deriſion. We are told, it is but a figurative expreſſion, and the ſame in its meaning with repentance or reformation. Doubtleſs it is ſo. And it were greatly to be wiſhed, that many did thoroughly underſtand what is implied in repentance unto life. But the reader is intreated to obſerve, that it is a metaphor frequently uſed in the holy ſcripture. I think, alſo, it is a metaphor of peculiar propriety and force; well adapted to bring into view both the nature of the change which it deſcribes, and the means by which it is accompliſhed. If there are any who in writing, or ſpeaking on this ſubject, have introduced or invented unſcriptural praſes, and gone into un-

* Ezek. xiii, 10, 11.

intelligible myſticiſm, this is neither wonderful in itſelf, nor ought it to be an injury or diſparagement to the truth. There is no ſubject either of divine or human learning, on which ſome have not written weakly, fooliſhly or erroneouſly; but that ought not to excite any averſion to the doctrine itſelf, which hath been perverted or abuſed. I pray, that God may enable me to write upon this intereſting ſubject, in a clear, intelligible and convincing manner; to ſupport the truth from the evidence of ſcripture and reaſon; to reſolve, in a ſatisfying manner, any objections that may ſeem to lie againſt it; but, above all, to carry it home with a perſuaſive force upon the conſcience and heart. I contend for no phraſes of man's invention, but ſuch as I find in the holy ſcriptures; from theſe I am reſolved, through the grace of God, never to depart. And, in the mean time, I adopt the words of the eminent and uſeful Dr. Doddridge, "If this doctrine, in "one form or another, be generally taught by "my brethren in the miniſtry, I rejoice in it for "their own ſakes, as well as for that of the peo-"ple who are under their care."

The plan of the following treatiſe is this:

I. To make ſome general obſervations upon the metaphor uſed by the apoſtle John, "Ex-"cept a man be born again;" and the ſame or ſimiliar

ſimilar expreſſions to be found in other parts of the word of God.

II. To ſhew wherein this change doth properly and directly conſiſt, together with ſome of its principal evidences and effects.

III. To ſhew by what ſteps, or by what means it is uſually brought about.

IV. In the laſt place, to improve the ſubject by a few practical addreſſes to perſons of different characters.

CHAP. I.

Some general obſervations on the metaphor uſed by the apoſtle John, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, *and the ſame ſimilar expreſſions to be found in other parts of the word of God.*

IT deſerves the ſerious attention of every chriſtian, that, as this declaration was made by our Saviour in a very ſolemn manner, and by a very peculiar metaphor, ſo this is not the ſingle paſſage in which the ſame metaphor is uſed. We find it in the apoſtle Paul's epiſtle to Titus, "Not "by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, "but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the "waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the "Holy Ghoſt *." We find one perfectly ſimilar to it, in the ſame apoſtle's ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians, "Therefore if any man be in "Chriſt, he is a new creature: old things are "paſt away, behold, all things are become "new †." It is elſewhere called a new creation, with reference to the power exerted in the production: "For we are his workmanſhip, created "in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which God "hath before ordained that we ſhould walk in "them ‡." It is ſtill a figure of the ſame kind

* Titus iii. 5. † 2 Cor. v. 17. ‡ Epheſ. ii. 10.

that

that is uſed when we are exhorted "to put off, "concerning the former converſation, the old "man, which is corrupt according to the de- "deceitful luſts: and to be renewed in the ſpirit "of our mind; and put on the new man, which "after God is created in righteouſneſs, and true "holineſs *." To name no more paſſages, the real believer is ſaid to be "born of God †;" in which the very expreſſion in the text is repeated, and the change attributed to God as his proper work.

Whoever believes in the perfection of the ſcriptures will readily admit, that it is intended we ſhould learn ſomething from this very way of ſpeaking itſelf. Let us therefore conſider what may be ſafely deduced from it. And, as I would not willingly ſtrain the metaphor, and draw from it any uncertain concluſion; ſo it is no part of my deſign to run it out into an extraordinary length. Many ſmaller reſemblances might eaſily be formed between the image and the truth, but they would be more fanciful than uſeful. The reader is only intreated to attend to a few leading truths, which ſeem naturally to ariſe from this metaphor, and may be both ſupported and illuſtrated from the whole tenor of ſcripture doctrine.

* Epheſ. iv. 22, 23, 24. † 1 John v. 4.

SECT.

SECT. I.

I. *From this expreſſion,* EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD, *we may learn the* GREATNESS *of that change which muſt paſs upon every child of Adam before he can become an heir of life.*

NO ſtronger expreſſion could have been choſen to ſignify a great and remarkable change of ſtate and character, whether we take the metaphor in a ſtricter or looſer ſenſe. If we take the metaphor in a ſtricter ſenſe, it may be intended to point out the change of ſtate in an infant newly born, from what it was immediately before the birth. The manner of its exiſtence, of deriving its nouriſhment, the uſe and application of its faculties, and its deſires and enjoyments, are all intirely different. If we take the metaphor in a looſer ſenſe, being born may be conſidered as the beginning of our exiſtence. To this ſenſe we ſeem to be directed by the other expreſſions of being created in Chriſt Jeſus, and made new creatures. Does not this ſtill teach us the greatneſs of the change! We muſt be entirely different from what we were before, as one creature differs from another, or as that which begins to be at any time, is not, nor cannot be the ſame with what did formerly exiſt.

This

This may alſo be well ſupported from a variety of other paſſages of ſcripture, and is a conſequence of different truths contained in the word of God. For example, our natural ſtate is, in ſcripture, compared to death, and our recovery to our being reſtored to life. Thus the apoſtle Paul in writing to the Epheſians ſays, "And you hath "he quickened who were dead in treſpaſſes and "ſins." And a little after, "But God, who "is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith "he loved us, even when we were DEAD "in ſins, hath quickened us together with "Chriſt *." To the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle John ſays, "We know that we have paſſed from "DEATH to life †." The change is ſometimes deſcribed by paſſing from darkneſs to light, than which two things none can ſtand in greater oppoſition to one another. "Ye were ſometimes "darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord ‡." Every one muſt be ſenſible how eaſy it would be to multiply paſſages of the ſame kind. But this I forbear, and only wiſh we had all of us a deep impreſſion of the meaning and importance of theſe upon our hearts.

It will not be improper, however, to obſerve how plainly the ſame truth appears from the power which the ſcripture repreſents as exerted

* Epheſ. ii. 1, 4, 5. † 1 John iii. 14. ‡ Epheſ. v. 8.

in bringing a ſinner from a ſtate of nature to a ſtate of grace. It is conſtantly affirmed to be the work of God, the effect of his power, nay, the exceeeding greatneſs of his power. "By grace "ye are ſaved, through faith, and that not of "yourſelves, it is the gift of God §." "Work "out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling "for it is God that worketh in you to will and "to do of his good pleaſure ‖. And what is the "exceeding greatneſs of his power to us ward "who believe, according to the working of his "mighty power which he wrought in Chriſt "when he raiſed him from the dead †." Now is there any need of a divine agent to perform a work of no moment? Would it be celebrated as an effect of the power of God, if it were not truly great?

Let me now, in the moſt earneſt manner, beſeech every perſon who reads theſe lines, to conſider deliberately with himſelf what is the import of this truth, and how firmly it is eſtabliſhed. It appears that regeneration, repentance, converſion, or call it what you will, is a very great change from the ſtate in which every man comes into the world. This appears from our Saviour's aſſertion, that we muſt be "born a again." It appears from a great variety of other ſcripture

§ Eph. ii. 8. ‖ Phil. ii. 12. † Eph. i. 19.

phraſes,

phraſes, and is the certain conſequence of ſome of the moſt eſſential doctrines of the goſpel.

With what jealouſy ought this to fill many of the ſtate of their ſouls? How ſlight and inconſiderable a thing is it that with multitudes paſſes for religion? eſpecially in theſe days of ſerenity and ſunſhine to the church, when they are not compelled by danger to weigh the matter with deliberation? A few cold forms, a little outward decency: ſome faint deſires, rather than endeavours, is all they can afford for ſecuring their everlaſting happineſs. Can the weakneſs and inſufficiency of theſe things poſſibly appear in a ſtronger light than when true religion is conſidered as a new creation, and a ſecond birth? If the inſpired writers be allowed to expreſs themſelves either with property or truth, it is painful to think of the unhappy deluded ſtate of ſo great a number of our fellow-ſinners.

Will ſo great a change take place, and yet have no viſible effect? Had any great change happened in your worldly circumſtances, from riches to poverty, or from poverty to riches, all around you would have ſpeedily diſcerned it. Had any ſuch change happened in your health, it had been impoſſible to conceal it. Had it happened in your intellectual accompliſhments, from ignorance to knowledge, it would have been quickly celebrated. How comes it then to be quite undiſcernible,

diſcernible, when it is from ſin to holineſs? I am ſenſible that men are very ingenious in juſtifying their conduct, and very ſucceſsful in deceiving themſelves. They will tell us that religion is a hidden thing, not to be ſeen by the world, but lying open to his view who judgeth the ſecrets of all hearts. And doubtleſs this is, in one view, a great truth: true religion is not given to oſtentation; diffident of itſelf, it is unwilling to promiſe much, leſt it ſhould be found wanting. But it ought to be conſidered that, however concealed the inward principle may be, the practical effects muſt of neceſſity appear. As one table of the moral law conſiſts entirely of our duty to others, whoever is born again, and renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, will be found a quite different perſon from what he was before, in his converſation with his fellow-creatures.

Hypocritical pretences to extraordinary ſanctity are indeed highly criminal in themſelves, and extremely odious in the ſight of God. But the preſent age does not ſeem to have the leaſt tendency to this extreme. There is another thing much more common, not leſs abſurd, and infinitely more dangerous to mankind in general: a demand upon the public, that, by an extraordinary effort of charity, they ſhould always ſuppoſe the reality of religion in the heart, when there is not the leaſt ſymptom of it in the life.

Nay,

Nay, ſome are hardly ſatisfied even with this, but inſiſt that men ſhould believe well of others, not only without, but againſt evidence. A bad opinion expreſſed of a man, even upon the moſt open inſtances of prophanity, is often anſwered with, "What have you to do to judge the "heart?" It is amazing to think what inward conſolation ſinners derive to themſelves from this claim of forbearance from their fellow-creatures. Let me beſeech all ſuch to conſider, that as God cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked, ſo in truth they uſually deceive none but themſelves. Every human affection, when it is ſtrong and lively, will diſcover itſelf by its apparent effects; and it is as true of religious affections as of any other, that "the tree is known by its fruits."

But if they have reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves whoſe change is not viſible to others, how much more thoſe, who, if they deal faithfully, muſt confeſs they are quite ſtrangers to any ſuch thing in their own hearts. I do not mean that every perſon ſhould be able to give an account of the time and manner of his converſion. This is often effected is ſo ſlow and gradual a manner, that it cannot be confined to a preciſe or particular period. But ſurely thoſe who are no way ſenſible of any change in the courſe of their affections, and the objects at which they are pointed can ſcarcely think that they are born again, or

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be able to affix a proper meaning to ſo ſtrong an expreſſion. I have read an obſervation of an eminent author, That thoſe who cannot remember the time when they were ignorant or unlearned, have reaſon to conclude that they are ſo ſtill: becauſe, however ſlow and inſenſible the ſteps of improvement have been, the effects will at laſt clearly appear, by compariſon with an uncultivated ſtate. In the ſame manner, whoever cannot remember the time when he ſerved the former luſts in his ignorance, has reaſon to conclude that no change deſerving the name of regeneration has ever yet taken place.

It will be, perhaps, accounted an exception to this, that ſome are ſo early formed for the ſervice of God, by his bleſſing on a pious education, and happily preſerved from ever entering upon the deſtructive paths of vice, that they cannot be ſuppoſed to recollect the time when they were at enmity with God. But this is an objection of no conſequence. The perſons here deſcribed have generally ſo much tenderneſs of conſcience, ſo deep a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, that, of all others, they will moſt readily diſcover and confeſs the workings of corruption in their own hearts, and that "law in their mem-"bers that warreth againſt the law of God in "their minds." They will be of all others moſt ſenſible of the growth of the new, and mortification

cation of the old nature; and will often remember the folly and vanity of youth, in inſtances that by moſt others would have been reckoned perfectly harmleſs.

What hath been ſaid in this ſection, is expreſsly deſigned to awaken ſuch ſecure and careleſs formaliſts as may have any general belief of the word of God. To be born again muſt be a great change. Can you then ſuppoſe that you have undergone this not only without any application to it, but without ſo much as being ſenſible of it, or being able to diſcover its proper effects.

SECT. II.

This expreſſion, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, *and other ſimilar expreſſions, imply that the change here intended is not merely partial, but univerſal.*

A New birth evidently implies an univerſal change. It muſt be of the whole man, not in ſome particulars, but in all without exception. As this is a truth which naturally ariſes from the ſubject, ſo it is a truth of the laſt moment and importance, which merits the moſt ſerious attention of all thoſe who deſire to keep themſelves from illuſion and ſelf-deceit in this intereſting queſtion.

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Innumerable are the deceits of Satan. If he cannot keep ſinners in abſolute blindneſs and ſecurity, which is his firſt attempt, he induſtriouſly endeavours to pervert their views of religion, either by cauſing them to miſtake appearances for realities, or ſubſtituting a part for the whole. This branch of the ſubject is of the more conſequence, that I am perſuaded it is peculiarly applicable to great numbers of the ordinary hearers of the goſpel as ſuch. The great bulk of thoſe who finally fall ſhort of everlaſting life, though they lived under the adminiſtration of word and ſacraments, are ruined by miſtakes of this kind. There are few of them, if any at all, who have at no time, through their whole lives, any ſerious impreſſions about their ſouls, or do nothing in the way of religion. There are ſtill fewer who are ſpeculative unbelievers, and fortify themſelves in their prophane practices, by irreligious principles. The far greateſt number do ſome things, and abſtain from others, to quiet the inward complaints of conſcience, and muſt have ſome broken reed or other on which they may reſt their eternal hopes.

It might ſerve in general to alarm ſuch perſons, that, as I have obſerved above, the change is evidently very great, and therefore they ought not eaſily to ſuppoſe that it is already paſt. But I now add ſomething ſtill more awakening, that the

the change, however great, if it is only partial, is not ſuch as is neceſſary to ſalvation. There may be a change truly great in ſome particulars, from one period of life to another, not only ſenſible to a man's ſelf, but viſible and remarkable to others about him, which yet is not ſaving, becauſe it is not general, or becauſe it is not permanent. The truth of this obſervation, that the change muſt be univerſal, appears from the conſtant tenor of the holy ſcriptures. Thus the Pſalmiſt ſays, "Then ſhall I not be aſhamed, "when I have reſpect unto ALL thy command-"ments *." And the apoſtle James, "Who-"ſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet of-"fend in one point, he is guilty of ALL †." It is, indeed, ſo much the language of ſcripture, that it is needleſs to inſiſt upon it. God will be ſerved without a rival, and will not ſhare dominion with any in the human heart. But what I am perſuaded will be of moſt uſe upon this ſubject, will be to point out, in a few particulars, by what means a partial change is ſometimes brought about, and how this differs from the ſaving and univerſal.

1. In the firſt place, ſometimes a partial change in point of morals, is produced merely by a natural or accidental change in age, temper, or ſituation. There are different ſins to which men

* Pſal. cxix. 6. † James ii. 10.

are

are addicted in the different periods or ſtages of human life. Theſe, of conſequence, give way to, and are ſucceeded by, one another. There are, indeed, inſtances of extraordinary depravation in ſo ne perſons, who "ſelling themſelves" like Ahab to work iniquity, become the ſlaves of almoſt every evil habit incident to human nature. Theſe however are eſteemed monſters even by the world in general, who continue in the commiſſion of every ſin while they can, and burn with deſires after them when they cannot. But it often happens that the folly and levity, nay, even the diſſolute licentiouſneſs of youth, gives way to the ambitious projects of riper years, and the hurry of an active life; and theſe again are ſucceeded by fordid, ſelfiſh, and covetous old age. In many caſes the ſins are changed, but the diſpoſition to ſin, and averſion from God, remains ſtill the ſame. One ſin may be eaſily ſupplanted by another, in a heart that is wholly a ſtranger to renewing grace. How greatly then may men deceive themſelves, by drawing favourable concluſions from even a great and remarkable change in ſome one or more particulars, while they continue under the goverment of ſins of a different kind. It is of ſmall conſequence which of the commandments of God are tranſgreſſed, ſince they are all of equal and indiſpenſible obligation. It is of little moment for a man to get quit of one

one diſtemper, by contracting another equally inveterate, and as certainly mortal. What profit was it to the Phariſee that he was not an extortioner like the publican? his pride rendered him ſtill more odious and deteſtable in the ſight of God.

I may add here, that beſides the common and neceſſary change of age and temper, a change of ſituation, employment, and connections, will ſometimes wean a man from one ſin, and introduce an attachment to another. If the temptation is removed, the fire may be extinguiſhed for want of fuel. The inclination to ſin in ſome kinds may be thus occaſionally weakened, or the commiſſion of it rendered impoſſible. It is eaſy to ſee that ſuch a change as this can be of no avail in the ſight of God; or rather to ſpeak more properly, it is only an apparent, and no real change at all. It is a difference of effect from an alteration of circumſtances, but ariſing from the very ſame cauſe. Are there not many who may apply this reflection to themſelves? Are there not many who have ceaſed to ſin in ſome reſpects, becauſe they have begun to ſin in others? Are there not many who are abuſed and deceived by this deluſory view? who take comfort to themſelves by remembering ſome ſpecies of ſins or follies which they now ſincerely and heartily deſpiſe? Take heed that this be not entirely owing

to your progreſs through life, or a change of circumſtances and ſituation. Are you not ſtill living as much to yourſelves as ever? as much averſe from a life of love to, and communion with God, as ever? Remember that though your conduct may be wiſer and more prudent, and your character more reſpectable in the world than before, this is no proof of regeneration; and "except a man be born again, he cannot "ſee the kingdom of God."

2. Sometimes a partial change is produced by ſtrong occaſional convictions, either from the word or providence of God. There are many inſtances in which convictions of ſin are raiſed in the minds of the hearers of the goſpel, which continue in great force for ſometime, and have a partial effect, which ſtill remains. Even a Felix is ſometimes made to tremble at the thoughts of a judgment to come. It is very certain that natural conſcience, when awakened by the word of God, will both reſtrain from ſin, and excite to duty, even while ſin hath the dominion upon the whole. As the ſpirit luſteth againſt the fleſh, and the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, in believers, ſo conſcience, the divine witneſs in the hearts of unbelievers, may urge to the practice of duty in a certain meaſure, when it is not able to change the heart inwardly and univerſally. It may deter from ſins to which the attachment is leſs ſtrong,

ſtrong, even whilſt it is not able to expel a darling luſt, or dethrone a favourite idol.

There is a remarkable example of this character in Herod, and his behaviour to John Baptiſt. We are told by the evangeliſt Mark, that Herod "feared John, knowing that he was a juſt man "and an holy, and obſerved him, and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him "gladly *." That is to ſay, he did many ſuch things as were leaſt contrary to the bent of corrupt affection. But that the change was not entire is plain; for when he was reproved for his beloved luſt, it only ſerved to enflame his reſentment, and he took away the life of his reprover. We find that Ahab king of Iſrael, of whom it is ſaid, that he "did more to provoke "the Lord God of Iſrael to anger, than all that "went before him," yet humbled himſelf on the denunciation of divine wrath, and was ſo far penitent as ſerved to procure a ſuſpenſion of the temporal ſtroke.

It appears, indeed, from innumerable inſtances in ſcripture, as well as from daily experience, that there are temporary convictions raiſed in the minds of many, both by the word and providence of God. It is alſo certain, that there are imperfect effects of theſe convictions, which often continue a conſiderable time, or rather are per-

* Mark vi. 20.

petual, though they are ſtill only partial. Many ſinners, though they continue unrenewed, yet dare not return to the ſame unbounded licence as before. Nay, there are ſome ſins, under the penal effects of which they have ſeverely ſmarted, which they never dare afterwards to indulge. We have a very remarkable national inſtance of this imperfect reformation in the Jews. They were at firſt ſhamefully and amazingly prone to idolatry, and continued ſo under repeated ſtrokes, till the terrible deſolation they met with at the Babyloniſh captivity: from that period, however, notwithſtanding their great guilt in other particulars, they never returned to idolatry, but to this day continue to have the deepeſt abhorrence of that capital crime.

There are many particular perſons in the ſame ſituation. Some ſins which have lain heavy on their conſciences, or for which they have ſeverely ſuffered in the courſe of providence, they will not commit; but others, one or more, which may be called their "own iniquity," they hold faſt, and will not let them go. Are there not different degrees of depravation and obſtinacy to be found in different ſinners, as well as different degrees of holineſs, obedience, and ſubmiſſion in the children of God? And though there is uſually a progreſs in the firſt to the worſe, as well as in the laſt to the better, yet ſtill there may be particular

ticular ſins which they dare not commit, and particular duties which they diligently diſcharge. Nay, this partial character is often the very thing that blinds their minds, and continues their ſecurity in an habitual alienation of heart from the life and power of true religion.

Are there not many cuſtomary Chriſtians who have a form of godlineſs, and, though they are utter ſtrangers to communion with God, yet nothing will induce them to part with their form. Are there not many whom it would be unjuſt to brand with the groſſer crimes of prophane ſwearing, ſenſual riot, or unclean luſt, who yet have their hearts ſet upon the world, which they love and purſue, and on which they reſt with complacency, as their ſweeteſt portion? Are all outwardly decent and ſober perſons ready to take up the croſs, and follow their maſter without the camp? Are they ready to forſake "houſes and brethren, and ſiſters "and lands, yea, and their own life alſo, for "his ſake and the goſpel's?" And yet without this they cannot be his diſciples. There are many hard ſayings in religion, which ordinary profeſſors cannot bear, and with which they never comply. Remember the caſe of the young man who came to our Saviour, and ſpoke with ſo much modeſty and diſcretion, but could not bear this great trial: "Then Jeſus beholding him lov-"ed him, and ſaid unto him, One thing thou

"lackeſt: go thy way, ſell whatſoever thou haſt, "and give to the poor, and thou ſhalt have trea- "ſure in heaven; and come, take up the croſs, "and follow me. And he was ſad at that ſay- "ing, and went away grieved, for he had great "poſſeſſions *."

3. Sometimes a partial change is produced, in a great meaſure, even by the love and attachment which men have to ſome one darling and governing ſin. The leſs willing they are to cut off the right-hand and to pluck out the right eye, the more zealous and diligent they will be in other things, to atone for the indulgence, or to cover it from their own obſervation. How careful is a Phariſee to tythe mint, aniſe, and cummin, while he neglects the weightier matters of the law? How does he "make broad his phy- "lacteries, and enlarge the borders of his gar- "ment," while he is defective in "judgment, "mercy, and faith?" How did the ancient Jews come with thouſands of rams, and ten thouſand rivers of oil, while living in the habitual neglect of ſome of the moſt important branches of the divine law? We have an appoſite example of this in the conduct of Saul, when ſent againſt Amalek: he ſpared of the ſpoil what was good, though he was commanded to deſtroy it, and then pretended to make a free uncommanded offering

* Mark x. 21, 22.

of

of ſacrifice unto God, for which he met with this juſt and ſevere reprimand: "Hath the Lord "as great delight in burnt-offerings and ſacri-"fices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Be-"hold, to obey is better than ſacrifice, and to "hearken than the fat of rams*." We ſee every day innumerable inſtances of the ſame kind; when there is any ſin which men are willing to ſpare, which they defend with arguments, or palliate with excuſes, they are ſo much the more ready to overdo in ſuch duties as are not ſo contrary to the preſent current of unſanctified affection.—From all this you will plainly ſee, that no man ought to judge of himſelf by the greatneſs of the change in any particular, unleſs it is univerſal and without exception.

SECT. III.

From theſe words, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD, *and other ſimilar expreſſions in the holy ſcriptures, we may infer that the change here intended is not merely* EXTERNAL *and* IMPERFECT, *but* INWARD, ESSENTIAL, *and* COMPLEAT.

I Might have divided this obſervation into two parts, and treated of them ſeparately, firſt ſhewing that it is not an outward and appa-

* 1 Sam. xv. 22.

rent only, but an internal and real change; ſecondly, that it is not an imperfect change, or difference in degree only, but a compleat and eſſential change of the whole character. But as the illuſtration of theſe two muſt have neceſſarily in a great meaſure coincided, and they are very cloſely connected, I have choſen to join them together.

That what ſhall be ſaid on this ſubject may be the more uſeful and profitable, I will endeavour to explain, in as diſtinct and ſimple a manner as I am able, what you are to underſtand by the above remark. The firſt part of it will be moſt eaſily comprehended, that it is not an external only, but an internal change; that the moſt apparently ſtrict and regular converſation, the moſt faultleſs diſcharge of outward duties, will not be ſufficient, while the heart continues enſlaved to ſin in general, or under the dominion of any particular luſt. The other part of the remark is, that the change muſt not only be imperfect, or in degree, but eſſential and compleat. That is to ſay, it is not ſufficient that a man be ſomewhat leſs wicked than before, that he not only gives up ſome ſins, but uſes moderation in others; nay though he be under ſome degree of reſtraint univerſally, if ſtill there is not what may be called an eſſential change of character, if ſtill ſin has the

the aſcendancy upon the whole, though its dominion be not ſo uncontroled as before.

Sin may certainly have the chief ſeat in the affections, though it hath not altogether quiet and peaceable poſſeſſion. There muſt always be ſome governing principle, which, properly ſpeaking, conſtitutes the character. As our Saviour tells us, "No man can ſerve two maſters; for either "he will hate the one and love the other, or "elſe he will hold to the one and deſpiſe the "other: ye cannot ſerve God and mammon *." Grace and corruption are oppoſite in their natures, and mutually deſtructive of each other, ſo far as they prevail: and therefore the great queſtion is, not how far any of them is altered from what it was formerly in itſelf, but how far it prevails in oppoſition to the other, and hath truly the government of the man. I find it extremely difficult to communicate this truth in a ſimple and intelligible manner, ſo as to be level to the meaneſt capacities. And it is little wonder; for here lies the chief part of the deceitfulneſs of ſin. It will, I hope, be better underſtood by what is now to be added, both for its proof and illuſtration.

That what I have above aſſerted is agreeable to the analogy of faith, and a part of the will of God, may eaſily be made appear. It is the conſtant uniform doctrine of the holy ſcriptures.

* Matt. vi. 24.

There we find it is the peculiar prerogative of God, that he ſeeth and judgeth the heart. By this his knowledge is diſtinguiſhed from, and excels all created underſtanding; and, therefore, as no appearance will deceive, ſo no inſincere profeſſion will be excepted by him: "For the Lord "ſeeth not as man ſeeth, for man looketh on "the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh "on the heart *." To this purpoſe is the exhortation of David to his ſon Solomon: "And "thou Solomon, my ſon, know thou the God "of thy father, and ſerve him with a perfect "heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord "ſearcheth all hearts, and underſtandeth all the "imaginations of the thoughts †."

The ſtreſs that is laid on this in ſcripture, and the frequent repetition of the word "heart," can hardly have eſcaped the notice even of the moſt curſory reader, or the moſt ſuperficial obſerver. We find the conſent of the heart required as indiſpenſibly and chiefly neceſſary, and that as diſtinguiſhed from outward and apparent obedience, which, without it, will be of no value. "My "ſon, give me thine heart," ſays Solomon, "and let thine eyes obſerve my ways §." We find an inward change of heart and diſpoſition promiſed by God as the work of his Spirit and

* 1 Sam. xvi. 7. † 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. § Prov. xxiii. 26.

grace:

grace: "A new heart alſo will I give you, and "a new ſpirit will I put within you; and I will "take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, "and I will give you an heart of fleſh, and "I will put my Spirit within you, and cauſe "you to walk in my ſtatutes and ye ſhall keep "my judgments and do them *." We find the ſame thing implored by penitent ſinners, as neceſſary to their recovery: "Create in me a clean "heart, O God, and renew a right ſpirit within "me †." And we find the duty of returning penitents preſcribed in the very ſame terms: "Caſt away from you all your tranſgreſſions, "whereby ye have tranſgreſſed, and make you "a new heart and a new ſpirit; for why will "ye die, O houſe of Iſrael ‡."

I ſhall only further obſerve, that we find in ſcripture an integrity of heart required to real religion; that is to ſay, that the love of God muſt be the commanding governing principle, that there muſt be no divided or rival affection ſuffered to remain: "For the Lord your God proveth "you, to know whether you love the Lord your "God with all your heart and with all your "ſoul ‖." The firſt duty of the moral law runs in theſe terms: "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy "God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, "and with all thy mind §:" which, as a pre-

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. † Pſal. li. 10. ‡ Ezek. xviii. 31. ‖ Deut. xiii. 3. § Matt xxii. 37.

cept of the goſpel, is explained by the following paſſage: "He that loveth father or mother more "than me, is not worthy of me; and he that "loveth ſon or daughter more than me, is not "worthy of me*." If, to any, the collecting of ſo many paſſages of ſcripture ſeem tedious, it is in tirely owing to the abundance and commonneſs of them. It were eaſy to have added ten times the number to thoſe which have been already quoted, a circumſtance to which I particularly beg the reader's attention, as it ſets in the ſtrongeſt light the certainty and importance of this truth.

Having ſo far confirmed and eſtabliſhed the obſervation from the ſacred oracles, I would willingly illuſtrate and apply it a little more particularly. And as truth ſeldom receives greater light from any thing than from a diſcovery of the oppoſite errors, I ſhall point out by what means ſometimes an apparent or imperfect change is produced, which is not inward and eſſential. This I apprehend will be effected by a view of the following characters, every where to be met with. 1. A character formed upon a well-conducted ſelfiſh principle. 2. One that is ſupremely governed by reputation, and a deſire of honour and reſpect from men. 3. One that is influenced by a religious principle in which a ſpirit of bondage and ſlaviſh fear chiefly predominates.

* Matt. x. 37.

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In the firſt place, There is a character in the world which may be ſaid to be formed upon a well-conducted ſelfiſh principle. It may be ſaid indeed, in general, of every unrenewed perſon, that in ſuch a heart God is dethroned, and ſelf, in one ſhape or other, is exalted, is ſet in his place, and reigns in his ſtead: but what I have chiefly in view at preſent is, to point out the character of thoſe who, in all thoſe parts of their conduct which aſſume the name of religion or of virtue, are chiefly actuated not by a ſenſe of duty, but by an intention to promote their own preſent ſatisfaction and comfort. It is the language of experience and ſound reaſon, as well as of the word of God, "that the wicked worketh a de-"ceitful work." There are many immediate and ſenſible bad conſequences of vice and wickedneſs. Some who have already ſmarted under their effects, may, therefore, in many inſtances avoid them, without any due ſenſe of the evil of ſin, as againſt the law of God, or taking his ſervice as their hearty and unfeigned choice.

Let us give ſome examples of this. A man may avoid intemperance and exceſs, purely or chiefly, becauſe it is hurtful to his health, and introduces ſuch diſorders into his frame as incapacitates him for reliſhing even the pleaſures of the world and of ſenſe. A man may find from experience, that being injurious to others in word or in deed, nay even reſenting the injuries done to him ſelf,

ſelf, raiſes him up ſo many enemies, and ſo inflames every little incident, as greatly diſturbs his peace. He may therefore be patient and forbearing, whilſt it is not owing to any weakneſs of mind, or government of his paſſions from a ſenſe of duty, but merely to the ſtrength of his judgment, and his falling upon the fitteſt way of promoting his own eaſe. It is preciſely this ſort of men who may often be obſerved to be reaſonable, modeſt, and ſelf-denied, in their deportment in the world in general, but ſavage and tyrannical, or peeviſh and diſcontented in their own families, where there are none upon equal terms with them, or able to make a formidable reſiſtance to them. A wiſe man may, upon the whole, by reflection diſcover, that what gives the higheſt reliſh and poignancy to every ſenſible enjoyment is, to habituate himſelf to ſome degree of ſelf-denial, to conduct them with decency, and to uſe them with ſobriety and moderation. When this conduct, as indeed is commonly the caſe, is the fruit of experience, it is ſo ſenſible a change, that it often paſſes itſelf not only on others, but even on the perſon concerned, for a religious change. But if the change is not inward as well as outward, if the affections ſtill flow in the ſame channel, though they are better hemmed in, and preſerved from impetuoſity and exceſs; if the ſource of happineſs is ſtill the ſame, though it is more ſparingly or more wiſely indulged, it is plainly

plainly the old nature, and the perſon cannot be ſaid to be born again. He is outwardly regular, and comparitively leſs wicked than before, but cannot be ſaid to love and ſerve God "with all "his heart and with all his ſoul."

We may learn from this a very important leſſon, to diſtinguiſh between human virtue and religion, between a decent and blameleſs carriage upon motives of preſent conveniency, and a new nature, or a gracious ſtate. I know ſome are highly diſſatisfied at making any diſtinction of this nature; but it is not plainly poſſible that ſuch a character as is deſcribed above may exiſt? Is it not alſo plain, for reaſons too obvious to be inſiſted on, that it cannot deſerve the name of a new or ſpiritual birth? And is it not therefore the duty of miniſters of the goſpel to put men in mind of this, as well as every other ſource of ſelf-deceit? Nay, the neceſſity in one view is greateſt in ſuch a caſe as this, that we may warn thoſe of their danger who have a name to live while they are dead, that we may ſhake the ſtrong-hold of the preſumptuous ſelf-applauding formaliſt, who is often more deaf and inſenſible to the things that belong to his peace, than the moſt abandoned profligate.

Is there any ready to ſay, Why do you take upon you to judge the heart, and aſcribe what you muſt confeſs to be excellent and amiable in itſelf, to wrong motives and an irreligious prin-

ciple?

ciple? I anſwer, I judge no man's heart; but, while I leave it to the deciſive judgment of God, would willingly ſubject its actings to its own review. It is but an appeal to the inward court of conſcience, or rather a citation of the perſon, with conſcience as the witneſs, to the tribunal of him that "trieth the reins and the heart." But after all, there is no difficulty in going a ſtep farther. We may often know the "tree by its "fruits." We may often diſcern the falſhood of theſe plauſible moraliſts, by an habitual worldlineſs of temper and converſation, by a great indifference about the ordinances and worſhip of God; nay, ſometimes a bold and avowed oppoſition to vital experimental religion, to the language and exerciſes of the ſpiritual life.

To prevent the miſunderſtanding of what hath been ſaid, it will be neceſſary to obſerve, that I intend not to deny the propriety or the uſe of theſe aſſiſtant motives, as they may be called, which ariſe from the preſent benefit and advantage of true religion. I have ſaid only, that the obedience or reformation which flows from no higher principle, is not ſuch as will be acceptable to God; it is not that change which is neceſſary before we can enter into life eternal. There are, however, various uſes to which theſe conſiderations may juſtly, and ought in duty to be applied. They ought to ſatisfy us of the excellence and truth of religion in general, and to

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be produced in oppoſition to the licentious and profane topics of converſation, ſo often to be met with in promiſcuous company. When any one begins to declaim in favour of luſt and ſenſuality, and alledges that nature has given us deſires, and why ſhould it give them, but in order to their gratification? Let the hearer immediately obſerve, that, by the corruption of nature, our appetites are greatly inflamed, and not at all in a ſound ſtate; that, as is plain from the moſt inconteſted experience, the beſt and moſt deſireable enjoyment of any ſenſible delights is that thankful, ſelf-denied, moderate uſe of them, which the word of God authoriſes or preſcribes.

The ſame reflections may very properly ſerve for awakening groſſer ſinners to a ſenſe of their danger. The prodigal ſeems to have been firſt brought to himſelf by a deep reflection upon his own folly. But he did not reſt here: he did not content himſelf with endeavouring to recover, by ſobriety and induſtry, the wealth which he had ſquandered away, but returned to his father for the forgiveneſs of his crime. In the ſame manner, no doubt, the loſs of health, ſubſtance, and reputation, ſhould convince the ſinner of the evil of his ways. This argument is uſed by the apoſtle Paul: "What fruit had ye then in the "things of which ye are now aſhamed *?" But

* Rom. vi. 21.

I would

I would never call that religion, which proceeds to no higher views; nor that repentance, which is compleated by no better principle.

Such reflections ſhould alſo be improved by every good man, to impreſs his mind with a deep ſenſe of the goodneſs of God. Every thing that he commands is truly moſt eligible in itſelf, and moſt beneficial to us. His will is as gracious as his authority is abſolute. Religion's "ways "are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are "peace.*" Well might our bleſſed Maſter ſay, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye ſhall "find reſt unto your ſouls: for my yoke is eaſy, "and my burden is light †." This ſhould daily diſpoſe us to thankfulneſs to that God who ſurrounds us with his care, and who follows us with loving-kindneſs and with tender mercies. His very reſtraints are favours, his commands are bleſſings.

Is it poſſible to avoid adding, that the ſame views ſhould be made uſe of to fortify us againſt temptation. When a ſenſe of duty is the prevailing deſire, we may very ſafely corroborate it with all theſe inferior conſiderations. It ſhould make ſin the more hateful and abominable, and prevent us from yielding to that party which

* Prov. iii. 17 † Matt. xi. 29, 30.

ſtill

ſtill ſecretly pleads for it in our imperfectly ſanctified hearts.

Before I leave this branch of the ſubject, I muſt ſpeak a few words to ſinners of a different character. If then many decent and regular perſons are nevertheleſs under the wrath of God, what terror ſhould this give to the more openly prophane, who are living inſtances of groſs wickedneſs? How many are there to be found among us, nay, how many appear from ſabbath to ſabbath in our worſhipping-aſſemblies, who live in the habitual practice of ſome of the moſt notorious crimes? How many, who live in a bold defiance of the truths and laws of our great Maſter, who are not only ſtained with original pollution, but labouring under a daily increaſing load of actual guilt? Are there not ſome ſwearers and blaſphemers of the great and dreadful name of God? Some deſpiſers and prophaners of his holy day? Some who add drunkenneſs to thirſt, waſting the creatures of God by diſſipating their own ſubſtance, defacing the image of God by undermining their own health, at one and the ſame time procuring and haſtening their final deſtruction? Are there not ſome walking in the luſt of uncleanneſs? ſome retaining, without reſtitution, the gain of unrighteouſneſs? Is it not ſurpriſing that ſuch do not tremble at the word of God? Can there be any doubt that all of the above

above characters are unrenewed? Is there any pretence for their deceiving themſelves? There is no juſt excuſe even for the more regular and ſober building their hope on a falſe foundation, but there is not ſo much as a ſhadow of excuſe for them. Dare any ſuch entertain a doubt of a judgment to come? Can any mortal be inſenſible of the precarioufneſs of time? The king of terrors lays his hand upon one after another, as he receives a commiſſion from the King of kings; and it is diſtreſſing to think in what an unprepared ſtate many receive the ſummons, which nevertheleſs they muſt of neceſſity obey.

Whoever thou art that readeſt theſe lines, if thou art yet unrenewed, but particularly if thou art one of thoſe whoſe ſins are open and manifeſt, I beſeech thee in the moſt earneſt manner to be reconciled unto God. "Behold now is the ac-
"cepted time, behold now is the day of ſalva-
"tion. God is in Chriſt reconciling the world
"unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto
"them." The blood of this Saviour is of infinite value. His Spirit is of irreſiſtible efficacy. He is "able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that
"come unto God by him." Delay not one moment. Give immediate thanks that thou art not already in the place of torment. Believe in the Son of God for righteouſneſs and ſtrength. Add

not

not to all thy other ſins againſt him, by undervaluing his atonement and deſpairing of mercy. And may it pleaſe God, by his own power, to reach thy heart, to ſnatch thee as a brand from the burning, and make thee an everlaſting monument of his grace and love.

2. In the ſecond place we may often find an appearance of religion or virtue in a character, ſupremely governed by reputation, or a deſire of reſpect and honour from the world. I ſay ſupremely governed, becauſe no doubt there may be a mixture of other principles whilſt this is the leading, the directing, and the governing view. I am ſenſible there are ſome who have no other view of any kind by a religious profeſſion than to deceive others, and under the fair diſguiſe of piety and ſeeming devotion, to carry on with more ſecurity and ſucceſs their unrighteous deſigns. That ſome ſuch are to be found in the world, ſad experience is a melancholy proof. The greatneſs of their guilt it is not eaſy to conceive, and ſtill more difficult to expreſs. As it muſt always proceed upon a known deliberate contempt of God, there is uſually ſuch a hardneſs of heart and ſearedneſs of conſcience attending it, that there is little probability of making any impreſſion upon them; or rather, to ſpeak more properly, they have all the ſymptoms of being given up of God and left to themſelves. But there is

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ſomething extremely harſh and unnatural in ſuſpecting any of wilful, deliberate hypocriſy, till it is plainly and openly detected. The truth is, I am perſuaded, that as it is a dreadful, ſo it is a rare character. The far greateſt part of thoſe who are under the power of hypocriſy, deceive themſelves as much as, or rather more than the world. Theſe laſt fall more properly in my way to be conſidered, as having undergone a ſeeming or apparent without any real change.

In order to illuſtrate the character and ſtate of thoſe who are ſupremely governed by reputation or a deſire of honour and reſpect, it will be proper to obſerve, that as the law of God is a tranſcript of his own perfect inherent excellence, true religion muſt be in itſelf amiable and lovely. Nay it muſt appear ſo even in the eyes of thoſe who are engaged in a ſtated oppoſition to its intereſt. You will ſay, how is this poſſible? Is it not a manifeſt contradiction? I anſwer, That though the ſpirit and principles from which true religion muſt flow, be directly contrary to the bent of an unrenewed heart, yet their effects are both amiable and beneficial. Bad men cannot endure inward mortification and ſelf-denial, being humbled as ſinners in the ſight of God, juſtified freely by his grace, ſanctified by his Spirit, and having nothing whereof to glory. Againſt theſe vital principles of piety the natural mind ſets itſelf with

with violence, and the unrenewed heart riſes with indignation. But the effect of true religion or a diligent compliance with the duties of the moral law, as it is amiable in itſelf, ſo it is alſo of good report among men. We are told in ſcripture, "that the righteous is more excellent than "his neighbour." And the apoſtle Paul exhorts us to our duty in the following terms: "Finally "brethren, whatſoever things are true, what-"ſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are "lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; "if there be any virtue, and if there be any "praiſe, think on theſe things *."

Does not this at once diſcover how many may attain to a conſiderable degree of regularity in the practice of their duty, while their governing principle is no better than a deſire of the eſteem of others. That character acquires a value in their eyes, which is in general repute, and will ſet them in the moſt favourable light. This hath often a ſecret and inſenſible influence, to which they themſelves do not attend. What favours the deceit is, that many of the very ſame duties are commanded in the law of God, and reputable in the ſight of man, They gladly embrace them therefore as the ſervice of God: it pleaſes

* Phil. iv. 8.

them

them to think, they ſhall by this means be acceptable to him. They fondly flatter themſelves, that this is the chief ground of their choice, and are not ſenſible that they are but offering incenſe to their own vanity. Self-partiality often hides the truth from our view, and conceals the chief ſprings and motives of action. Since diſorder was introduced into the human frame by ſin, there is no creature whoſe character is ſo mixed, variable, inconſiſtent, and ſelf-contradictory as man. Other creatures are regular and uniform, ſteadily fulfil their functions; their nature and diſpoſition may be known without ambiguity, and they always reach their end. But man is, as it were, torn to pieces by the conflicting principles of light and darkneſs; and from the different and contrary ſymptoms which often appear, it is hard to tell in what claſs he ſhould be ranged.

From this will evidently appear, the neceſſity of an inward and eſſential change. That which is done to gain the applauſe of men, will never be reckoned an acceptable part of the ſervice of God. On the contrary, he holds it in the higheſt deteſtation. See the exhortation of our Saviour: "Take heed that you do not your alms "before men, to be ſeen of them, otherwiſe ye "have no reward of your Father which is in hea-

" heaven *. I cannot help obſerving here, that men of this character may be divided into two claſſes, who commonly ſtate themſelves in oppoſition to, and have the greateſt hatred or contempt for, each other, and yet are acted by one common principle.

There are ſome who ſeem chiefly to confine their views to a fair and honourable carriage in their correſpondence and commerce between man and man. Theſe are commonly perſons of higher rank, and all who deſire to emulate them, and wiſh to be claſſed with them. In ſuch, honour holds the place of religion: or, at leaſt, is a ſuperior or more powerful principle. They would not willingly ſtain their reputation with any thing that is baſe or mean, according to the ſtandard they have formed to themſelves, of decency of character and dignity of carriage. This ſtandard of decency, however, is very changeable. It is either more narrow or more extenſive, according to the ſentiments of thoſe with whom they moſt frequently converſe. And there is often ſome mixture of religion, which ſerves under, and co-operates with, the commanding motive.

There are vaſt multitudes of this character in the preſent age, who cannot be deſcribed in juſter or more ſignificant terms than thoſe of

* Matt. vi. 1.

the apoſtle Paul; they are "conformed to this "world." They tread in its ſteps, they act upon its maxims, they aſk its approbation, and they have their reward.

How far ſuch perſons are from being renewed in the ſpirit of their mind, and how much they are the ſervants of men, may be plainly diſcovered by the following ſign; that they are almoſt as much aſhamed of unfaſhionable duties, as of diſhonourable crimes. How different is their boaſted dignity of mind from a truly holy reſolution and chriſtian magnanimity? Are there not ſome, whoſe integrity in ordinary caſes may be depended on, and who would abhor the thoughts of a mean and dirty action, as it is uſually ſtiled, but who would be covered with nearly equal ſhame, if ſurpriſed in any act of devotion, as if detected in diſhoneſty and fraud? How many, who would brave the king of terrors in the field of battle, from a ſenſe of honour; but who, tho' far from being infidels, have not ſufficient courage to worſhip, in their families, the great Creator and Preſerver of men? Such may ſee the reception they ſhall meet with at laſt, and even feel the juſtice of their own condemnation in theſe words of our Saviour: "Whoever, there-"fore, ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, "in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of "him

" him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, " when he cometh in the glory of his Father, " with the holy angels *."

There are others of a different ſtamp, who ſeek the approbation of men, more by an appearance of piety and devotion, and the duties of the firſt table of the law. That there are ſome ſuch alſo, not only the word of God, but daily experience puts beyond all doubt or queſtion. " This people," ſaith our Lord, " draweth nigh " unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me " with their lips, but their heart is far from " me †." I ſet aſide, both in this and in the former inſtance, the caſe of groſs, intended, and deliberate hypocriſy. But are there not many, who, in their religious duties, ſeem chiefly to have in view the attaining or preſerving the eſteem and approbation of others? They are not determined from any inward and perſonal conviction of the excellence or neceſſity of religion; but from their youth up, they have ſtill heard religion ſpoken of with reverence, and ſeen religious perſons treated with reſpect. This makes them conſider an entire neglect of religious duties as ſhameful rather than ſinful; and ſome degree of profeſſed attachment to them, as neceſſary to their character and credit.

* Mark viii. 38. † Matt. xv. 8.

This, like many other motives, has a ſtrong, tho' at the ſame time an inſenſible influence, and when mixed with imperfect convictions of ſin, will produce no ſmall degree of regularity in religious exerciſes, while yet the heart is habitually ſet upon the world. In whatever age or place there is a regular and ſettled adminiſtration of the ordinances of Chriſt, there will be many whoſe religion is no more than a blind imitation of others, and a deſire of ſome title to that character which is in eſteem and repute for the time being. Wherever there is much real, there will alſo be much counterfeit religion. Wherever there is much true piety, it is always loaded with the dead weight of many cuſtomary profeſſors. Wherever there is much outward eſteem waiting upon the ſervants of God, there will always be many of theſe fair-weather chriſtians, who follow Chriſt whilſt the profeſſion is honourable, but are unacquainted with that part of his ſervice, which conſiſts in taking up the croſs, and ſuffering reproach. Their character is well deſcribed by our Saviour, under the image of ſeed falling upon ſtony places. "He that re-
"ceived the ſeed into ſtony places, the ſame
"is he that heareth the word, and anon with
"joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in him-
"ſelf, but dureth for a while; for when tribu-
"lation

" lation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the " word, by and by he is offended *."

3. In the third place, there is ſtill another character different from both the former, in which there may be an apparent and imperfect, while there is no compleat and eſſential change. The character I have now in view is formed upon religious principles, but in which a ſpirit of bondage and ſlaviſh fear greatly predominates. It is often difficult, according to the ſcripture expreſſion, rightly to divide the word of truth: it is difficult to point out the errors by which men deceive themſelves, and miſtake the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, and at the ſame time to caution them ſo diſtinctly, as that ſerious perſons may not be alarmed; their peace and comfort interrupted by unneceſſary or ill-grounded fears. Perhaps there are few ſubjects in which this difficulty is greater, than the one I have now mentioned. I pray that God, for Chriſt's ſake, may enable me to open the truth in ſuch a manner, as may convince and awaken thoſe who have hitherto built with untempered mortar, and may give additional peace and conſolation to thoſe who have " fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope ſet be- " fore them."

* Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

That it is of importance to open this character, every one may, upon a little reflection, be ſenſible. There are many who will not find themſelves included in any of the the two former. Upon the moſt candid examination, conſcience bears them witneſs, that they have more in view than merely preſent eaſe and comfort, or the approbation of others. They have often a ſtrong impreſſion of the importance of an endleſs eternity. This hath a ſenſible and conſiderable influence upon their conduct, and is a motive quite diſtinct from worldly pleaſure. It compels them to duties out of the reach of human obſervation, and therefore they cannot think that the praiſe of men is their higheſt aim.

But are there not many ſuch under the dominion of fear? that is to ſay, conſcience in ſome meaſure awakened, denounces vengeance againſt the breeches of the law of God: providential diſpenſations fill them with a terror of divine power; they know they cannot live always, and tremble to think what ſhall become of them after death. Well, perhaps the reader will ſay, with ſome ſurpriſe, is this wrong! No, ſo far their exerciſe coincides with that of real penitents. But here, if I may ſo expreſs it, the ways part aſunder: the real penitent, by a diſcovery of the intrinſic evil of ſin, of the mercy of God, and the great foundation of a ſinner's hope, is led in the way

of

of peace; his heart is truly changed, and brought under the influence of the love of God, whom he obeys as his law-giver; to whom he ſubmits as his Lord; and in whom he reſts as his portion. But there are others, who, by abſtinence from ſome ſins, againſt which the reproofs of conſcience are moſt diſtinct and ſevere, and by the formal diſcharge of many religious duties, endeavour to leſſen their fears; to lay a foundation for a precarious peace; and, as it were, by a coſtly ſacrifice, to purchaſe an immunity from hell. Fear not only awakens, but continues to govern them; they lay down a legal ſyſtem of obedience and ſelf-righteouſneſs, but all the while they drag the yoke with great impatience. They do not hate ſin from their hearts, on its own account, but are afraid that they ſhall burn for ever for committing it. They do not love God, but they fear, becauſe they know that they cannot reſiſt him. They do not engage in his ſervice with chearfulneſs, or delight in it as their choice, but groan under it as a burthen. Their hearts and affections are ſet upon preſent and temporal enjoyments; but they apply themſelves in ſome meaſure to the duties of religion, becauſe they know they cannot keep the world always; and ſubmit to it, as rather better and more tolerable than everlaſting miſery.

The frequency of this character will ſtand in need of little proof. If the features are juſtly drawn, I am perſuaded they will be eaſily known, for they are very common. Are there not many who may juſtly ſuſpect themſelves to be acted by no higher motive than the fear of wrath? Does not this plainly ſhew itſelf, by your backward, heartleſs, cold diſcharge of duty; your regret and ſorrow in parting with, and frequent relapſes into ſin? Is not your religion temporary and changeable? Does it not riſe and fall with the ſenſible tokens of divine preſence and power? Have you not trembled on a ſick-bed, or other time of danger; humbled yourſelves before God; cried for relief; and promiſed amendment? But has not your reſolution relaxed upon your recovery, and your diligence borne proportion to the ſuppoſed nearneſs or diſtance of the dangér? Is not this then manifeſtly the effect of fear: and may not the words of the Pſalmiſt be juſtly applied to all ſuch? "When he ſlew them, then "they ſought him; and they returned, and "enquired early after God: and they remem-"bered that God was their rock, and the high "God their redeemer: nevertheleſs they did "flatter him with their mouth, and they lied "unto him with their tongues; for their heart

"was

" was not right with him, neither were they ſted-
" faſt in his covenant *."

Few things, I apprehend, will be of more importance than to ſhew, in a clear and ſatisfying manner, that the obedience or religious performances that are influenced by no higher motive than fear, are not acceptable to God, nor any ſufficient evidence of a renewed heart. This, indeed, is equally plain from many paſſages of ſcripture, and from the nature and reaſon of the thing. It appears from all thoſe paſſages formerly cited, and many others where mention is made of the inclination of the heart and will, of which obedience on compulſion can be no manner of proof. It appears undeniably from the great commandment of the law, and ſum of practical religion, " Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with
" all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with
" all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind †."
It appears from what is always repreſented as the great commanding and conſtraining motive of the goſpel : " For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us,
" becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all,
" then were all dead ; and that he died for all,
" that they which live ſhould not henceforth
" live unto themſelves, but unto him which died
" for them, and roſe again ‡." To the ſame

* Pſal. lxxviii. 34, 35, 36, 37. † Luke x. 27.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 14.

purpoſe the apoſtle John ſays, "We have known "and believed the love that God hath to us. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love "dwelleth in God, and God in him §." We find in ſcripture that there is a direct oppoſition ſtated between the ſpirit of genuine converts under the goſpel, and a ſpirit of bondage, or ſlaviſh fear: "For ye have not received the ſpirit of "bondage again to fear, but ye have received "the ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, "Father *." So ſays the ſame apoſtle to Timothy, "For God hath not given us the ſpirit "of fear, but of power and of love, and of a "ſound mind †."

The truth is, it is equally plain from the nature and reaſon of the thing. That which is done only or chiefly from fear, cannot be any evidence of the change that is acceptable to God, becauſe, properly ſpeaking, it is no real or inward change at all. The effects of ſin are reſtrained or controlled by ſuperior power, but the inclination to it remains ſtill the ſame. It is a common and known principle, that whatever is the effect of compulſion or force upon the agent, whether it be good or evil in itſelf, hath nothing moral in its nature. The ſword that commits murder, and that which executes juſtice, deſerves equal

§ 1 John iv. 16. * Rom. viii. 15. † 2 Tim. i. 7.

blame

blame or praiſe, or rather none of them deſerves either the one or the other. A detected thief, compelled to make reſtitution, or loaded with chains ſo that he cannot ſteal, does not thereby become honeſt in his nature.

The caſe is preciſely the ſame with thoſe who, in their religious duties, are under the government of fear, although it be the fear of their almighty Judge. From any ſimilar inſtance between man and man, we may at once be ſenſible of this truth. If one man is willing to over-reach another, but, through his adverſary's ſuperior ſkill, is not able, or, terrified by threatenings, is not bold enough to attempt it, what character does he bear, or deſerve, but that of a diſappointed knave? What parent or maſter will be ſatisfied with the obedience of a child or ſervant, who plainly diſcovers that he hates his commands, and grieves at his authority? It is true, as man can only judge with certainty of the outward appearance, this circumſtance muſt be left out of every ſyſtem of human government. We can make no laws on earth to puniſh the intention: but ſo much we know of it, as may make us ſenſible what all ſuch deſerve, and ſhall receive, at the hand of God, whoſe prerogative it is that he knoweth and judgeth the ſecrets of all hearts.

I ſhall only further obſerve, that the ſame thing appears in the cleareſt manner, from the

nature of that happineſs which is prepared for the children of God in the life to come. It is purely ſpiritual, as it is perfectly holy: it conſiſts in the knowledge of God, in the exerciſe of love to him, in conformity to his nature, and the execution of his will. Thoſe who are under the dominion of fear, who have no love to God, but only deſire to avoid his wrath, will certainly find, that, though it were poſſible for them to eſcape hell, they neither deſerve, nor are able to reliſh, the employment and happineſs of heaven. As the commands of God are a burden to them on earth, his immediate preſence would be a ſtill more inſupportable burden in heaven.—From all this I hope it appears evidently, that a character may be formed upon religious principles, and yet, if it is never carried further than a reſtraint by fear, it is not that change which is neceſſary to ſalvation.

It will not be improper, or rather it will be abſolutely neceſſary, to make a reflection or two upon this branch of the ſubject for its improvement, and to prevent its being miſtaken or miſapplied. For this purpoſe let it be obſerved, That we muſt carefully diſtinguiſh the ſlaviſh dread above explained, from that dutiful reverential fear which every child of God is ſtill bound to preſerve upon his mind of his Father who is in heaven. Of the firſt kind it is ſaid, "There is

"no

"no fear in love, but perfect love caſteth out "fear, becauſe fear hath torment: he that fear- "eth is not made perfect in love *." In proportion as the love of God prevails, the firſt ſort of fear is baniſhed, but the other is ſo far from being baniſhed, that it rather increaſes. This is no other than a profound veneration of the unſpeakable greatneſs and glory of God, and particularly of his holineſs and purity, which ſhould bring every creature proſtrate before him. We find in the viſion of Iſaiah, the heavenly hoſts repreſented as deeply penetrated with ſuch a diſcovery: "In the year that king Uzziah died, I "ſaw the Lord ſitting upon the throne high and "lifted up, and his train filled the temple: above "it ſtood the ſeraphims; each one had ſix "wings; with twain he covered his face, with "twain he covered his feet, and with twain he "did fly. And one cried unto another and ſaid, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the Lord of hoſts, the "whole earth is full of his glory †."

This not only may, but ought, in us to be accompanied with a fear of the puniſhment incurred by ſin: at the ſame time it muſt be inſeparably connected with, or rather founded upon, a ſenſe of the holineſs of his nature, the purity of his law, and the juſtice of his vengeance. On the contrary, that fear of God which prevails in the

* 1 John iv. 18. † Iſaiah vi. 1, 2, 3.

unregenerate,

unregenerate, is founded only on the terror of his power, as a natural attribute. It is like the ſtruggling of a chained ſlave, who "gnaws his "tongue for pain," who is not ſatisfied with the equity of the law, which he has tranſgreſſed, and cannot admit the juſtice of that ſentence, the execution of which he apprehends.

There is no inconſiſtency at all between the fear and love which terminate on the correſpondent attributes of God, majeſty and mercy. A chriſtian may, and ought, to grow in a ſenſe of the divine preſence, and reverential dread of the divine majeſty, and ſo be ſtill more afraid of ſinning; at the ſame time he may alſo grow in a ſweet calm and compoſure of mind, a fiducial truſt and reliance on the divine faithfulneſs and mercy: juſt as, on the other hand, ſome ſinners evidently increaſe both in preſumption and timidity. During a great part of their lives they act without reflection and without reſtraint, and yet, at particular ſeaſons, they are in a manner diſtracted with terror: nay, though it often happens that groſs wickedneſs ſears the conſcience, and produces an inſenſibility and hardneſs of heart there are inſtances of the greateſt profligates being liable to the moſt alarming fears *. Let us

* We are told that Nero, one of thoſe monſters called Roman emperors, though he adventured to perpetrate ſome of the moſt horrid crimes, was yet ſo eaſily terrified, that a thunder-ſtorm uſed to make him hide himſelf under a bed.

never,

never, therefore, confound things ſo very oppoſite as a fear of the living God, joined to an inward and hearty approbation of his commands, and that unwilling obedience or abſtinence which views him as a ſtern tyrant, and trembles at the thoughts of his wrath.

It will be farther neceſſary to obſerve, that, as a ſlaviſh fear is to be entirely diſtinguiſhed from that which is filial and dutiful, ſo no doubt there is often, even in real chriſtians, a mixture of the ſpirit of bondage itſelf, though they are ſupremely governed by a better principle. This is not to be wondered at, ſince they are ſanctified but in part. There is a ſtrong remainder of ſin and corruption in them of different kinds, and, among the reſt, a very blameable degree of unbelief and diſtruſt. How many are there whoſe comfort is leſſened, and whoſe hands hang down, through an exceſſive fear of death, the laſt enemy? What a refreſhment ſhould it be to all ſuch to think of this end of our Saviour's coming, to "deliver them who, through fear of death, "were all their life-time ſubject unto bond-"age*." For their ſakes, I am perſuaded, it will not be diſagreeable that, in the cloſe of this ſection, I lay down a few marks, by which they may be enabled to judge whether this ſlaviſh fear predominates or not.

* Heb. ii. 15.

1ſt

1ſt then, Chriſtian, whether or not is your fear of wrath immediately connected with a ſenſe of the evil of ſin? Do you ſee theſe two things in their inſeparable relation to, and mutual influence upon, one another? Do you fear wrath as the effect of ſin, and ſin as the juſt cauſe of wrath? Have you no fault to find with this connection? Do you plead guilty before God, and confeſs that you are without excuſe? Is ſin truly hateful in itſelf, and your own unhappy proneneſs to it an habitual burden? The language of a believer is the ſame with that of the apoſtle Paul: "Wherefore "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, "and juſt, and good. Was then that which is "good made death unto me? God forbid. But "ſin, that it might appear ſin, working death in "me by that which is good, that ſin by the com-"mandment might become exceeding ſinful. "For we know that the law is ſpiritual, but I "am carnal, ſold under ſin *." In thoſe who are under the dominion of fear, there is no juſt ſenſe of the evil of ſin, there is a proneneſs to extenuate it, an inclination to juſtify it, and a continual attempt to forget or conceal it. The crime is ſtill ſweet, though the puniſhment is terrible. They are not ſatisfied to find that God is ſo holy, ſo juſt, and ſo powerful. With them his government is arbitrary, his law is ſevere, his nature

* Rom. vii. 12, 13, 14.

implacable;

implacable; and, inſtead of changing their own diſpoſition, they would much rather wiſh a change in his will.

2. Whether does your fear of God drive you from his preſence, or excite a ſtrong deſire of reconciliation and peace? The ſlaviſh fear which is not attended with any juſt views of the divine mercy, clothes God with terror, and makes him the object of averſion. This is plainly the firſt effect of ſin. It was ſo in the caſe of Adam, who, as ſoon as he had loſt his integrity, when he heard God's voice in the garden, fled and hid himſelf. We find the ſame ſentiment expreſſed by the men of Bethſhemeſh, upon an extraordinary token of divine power and jealouſy: "And "the men of Bethſhemeſh ſaid, Who is able to "ſtand before this holy Lord God, and to whom "ſhall he go up from us*." Nay, the ſame ſeems to have been the view of the apoſtle Peter, when ſurpriſed with an aſtoniſhing evidence of his maſter's power and Godhead. "When Si-"mon Peter ſaw it, he fell down at Jeſus feet, "ſaying, Depart from me, for I am a ſinful "man, O Lord†."

This diſpoſition is daily manifeſt in many who are under the dominion of fear. The worſhip of God is painful to them, his ſervice is a burden, his preſence is terrible: they keep at a diſtance,

* 1 Sam. vi. 20. † Luke v. 8.

therefore,

therefore, as much as they can or dare. Their peace and compoſure is chiefly owing to their loſing themſelves, and occupying their minds entirely with different objects. No ſign will more ſurely diſcover the nature and influence of ſlaviſh fear than this. There is a gloom and melancholy ſpread over every thing in religion to them; when they are engaged in ſacred duties, it is a heavy, tireſome taſk, and they rejoice in getting them over, as a bullock when he is looſed from the yoke. On the other hand, real chriſtians, though burdened with ſinful fear, cannot take refuge in any thing elſe than God; they dare not take their reſt in the creature, but ſay with Job, "Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him *;" or with the Pſalmiſt David, "Yet the Lord will "command his loving-kindneſs in the day-time, "and in the night his ſong ſhall be with me, "and my prayer unto the God of my life †." Nothing gives relief to ſuch, till they attain to a view of the divine mercy, and a humble hope of peace and reconciliation.

3. Whether have you comfort and ſatisfaction in a ſenſe of God's favour, as well as a diſtreſſing fear of his wrath? This alſo will ſerve to diſtinguiſh between thoſe who have no other religion than what fear produces, and thoſe in whom it only maintains a conflict with a better principle. There

* Job xiii. 15. † Pſal. xlii. 7

are

are ſome who are reſtrained from ſin, and compelled to many duties, by fear, who may eaſily ſee what governs them, becauſe they are altogether ſtrangers to joy and ſatisfaction in God. This is not, indeed, what they aim at. They have never yet ſeen his favour as the object of ſupreme deſire. They only believe ſo far as to tremble, and would fain by compoſition, ſo to ſpeak, and ſome degree of compliance, though reluctant and backward, avoid the divine wrath. A coldneſs and conſtraint runs through all their performances, and they are apt to call in queſtion the reality of joy in God, and communion with him, becauſe they are altogether ſtrangers to it themſelves. But all the real children of God deſire a ſenſe of his love, as well as grieve or fear under a ſenſe of his diſpleaſure. The light of his reconciled countenance gives them more joy and gladneſs than the greateſt affluence of corn or of wine; and under the ſevereſt chaſtiſement, inſtead of flying from his preſence, they ſay with Job, "O "that I knew where I might find him, that I "might come even to his ſeat; I would order "my cauſe before him, and fill my mouth with "arguments *." Nothing, indeed, can be more proper than calling the one a filial, and the other a ſlaviſh fear: for great is the difference between a child fearing the diſpleaſure of a parent whom

* Job. xxiii. 3, 4.

he

he ſincerely loves, and a ſlave dreading the reſentment of an enraged tyrant, whoſe ſervice he abhors.

SECT. IV.

From this metaphor, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD, *and other parallel expreſſions in the holy ſcriptures, we may learn that the change here intended is* SUPERNATURAL.

WHEN I ſay it is a ſupernatural change, I mean that it is what man cannot by his own power effect, without ſuperior or divine aid. As we are by nature in a ſtate of enmity and oppoſition to God, ſo this is what we cannot "of "ourſelves" remove or overcome. The exerciſe of our own rational powers, the perſuaſion of others, the application of all moral motives of every kind will be ineffectual, without the ſpecial operation of the Spirit and grace of God. Thus the apoſtle John deſcribes thoſe who believe in the name of Chriſt: "Which were born not of "blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the "will of man, but of God *." And thus the apoſtle Paul expreſſes himſelf: "Not by works "of righteouſneſs which we have done, but ac-"cording to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſh-

* John i. 13.

"ing

"ing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy "Ghoſt*." There is no part of the ſcripture doctrine which the natural man hears with greater averſion, or oppoſes with greater violence. It gives ſo humbling a view of our own character and ſtate, and ſtands ſo directly oppoſed to pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, that it cannot be truly acceptable to any, till they are brought to a ſaving acquaintance with its power and efficacy. However it hath been, this "fooliſhneſs of "preaching," or rather, this commonly-eſteemed fooliſh part of preaching, that God hath moſt remarkably bleſſed for the ſalvation of ſouls. I will therefore endeavour to ſhew, in as plain and ſatisfying a manner as I am able, that this is the doctrine of the holy ſcripture; and then to vindicate it from the chief objections that are uſually raiſed againſt it.

How many paſſages of ſcripture are there, that ſpeak in the ſtrongeſt terms, not only of our miſerable but helpleſs ſtate before converſion. Thus the apoſtle to the Epheſians, "And you "hath he quickened, who were dead in treſ-"paſſes and ſins†." And again, "But God, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-"with he loved us, even when we were dead "in ſins, hath quickened us together with

* Titus iii. 5. † Eph. ii. 1.

"Chriſt

"Chriſt (by grace ye are ſaved*.") In his epiſtle to the Coloſſians, he repeats the ſame thing; "And you, being dead in your ſins and "the uncircumciſion of your fleſh, hath he "quickened together with him, having forgiven "you all your treſpaſſes†." The reader muſt know, that in many other paſſages the ſame truth is to be found, couched under the ſame or like metaphors; ſuch as "blindneſs, darkneſs, "hardneſs of heart." The force of the expreſſion is ſeldom ſufficiently attended to. Suffer me then to put the queſtion, Do you give credit to the holy ſcriptures? Do you form your opinions without partiality or prejudice from them? Then you muſt receive it as truth that man, in his natural ſtate, can do nothing of himſelf to his own recovery, without the concurrence of ſuperior aid. If there is any meaning or propriety in ſcripture language, we muſt yield to this. What more could be ſaid, than that we are "dead" in ſin? What more incapable of action, than one who is entirely deprived of life?

But leſt there ſhould be any remaining exception, the thing is aſſerted in plain and explicit terms, without any metaphor, by the apoſtle John, from our Saviour's own mouth: "No

* Eph. ii. 4, 5. † Col. ii. 13.

"man

" man can come unto me, except the Father " which hath ſent me draw him: and I will " raiſe him up at the laſt day. It is written in " the prophets, And they ſhall be all taught " of God; every man, therefore, that hath " heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh " unto me*." I ſhall mention only one paſſage more, in which, under the ſimilitude of a wretched outcaſt infant, the prophet Ezekiel repreſents the natural ſtate of Jeruſalem. " And " as for thy nativity, in the day thou waſt born, " thy navel was not cut, neither waſt thou " waſhed in water to ſupple thee; thou waſt " not ſalted at all, nor ſwaddled at all. None " eye pitied thee, to do any of theſe unto thee, " to have compaſſion upon thee; but thou waſt " caſt out in the open field, to the loathing of " thy perſon, in the day that thou waſt born. " And when I paſſed by thee, and ſaw thee, " polluted in thine own blood, I ſaid unto thee, " when thou waſt in thy blood, Live; yea, I " ſaid unto thee, when thou waſt in thy blood, " Live †." Here all the circumſtances are collected, that could ſignify at once a miſerable and weak, wretched and helpleſs condition; or that could ſerve to make our deliverance at once a ſignal inſtance both of grace and power.

* John vi. 44, 45. † Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, 6.

This

This leads me to obſerve, that the ſame truth will receive further light from theſe paſſages of ſcripture, in which the real agent in this great change is pointed out, and which celebrate the efficacy of his power. As in the text it is aſſerted, that, "except a man be born "again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of "God." So in other paſſages, true believers are ſaid to be "born of God—born from above "—born of the Spirit." The power of God exerted in the renovation of the ſinner, is deſcribed in language taken from the firſt formation of the world. "For we are his workmanſhip, "created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, "which God hath before ordained that we "ſhould walk in them*." And, "If any "man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old "things are paſt away, behold all things are "become new†." See the prophecies of the old teſtament, reſpecting the plentiful effuſion of the holy Spirit in the times of the goſpel: they contain a clear deſcription of divine ſupernatural influence. Thus the prophet Iſaiah, "For I "will pour water upon him that is thirſty, and "floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my "Spirit upon thy ſeed, and my bleſſing upon "thine offspring; and they ſhall ſpring up as

* Eph. ii. 10. † 2 Cor. v. 17.

"among

"among the graſs, and as willows by the wa-
"ter-courſes*." To the ſame purpoſe the pro-
phet Ezekiel: "Then will I ſprinkle clean wa-
"ter upon you, and ye ſhall be clean from all
"your filthineſs, and from all your idols will I
"cleanſe you. A new heart alſo will I give
"you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you;
"and I will take away the ſtony heart out of
"your fleſh, and I will give you an heart of
"fleſh; and I will put my ſpirit within you,
"and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes; and ye
"ſhall keep my judgments, and do them †."
Let it not ſeem tedious to any that I have col-
lected ſo many paſſages of ſcripture on this ſub-
ject. It is no light thing; and indeed, it is no
common thing to believe it from the heart. But
let us now affirm it, on divine teſtimony, that
regeneration is the work of the Holy Ghoſt.

I would not build this truth upon any other
evidence. When we ſtand in God's room, bear
his meſſage, and ſpeak in his name, nothing
ſhould be affirmed, which cannot be ſupported
by a "Thus ſaith the Lord." But having done
ſo, I think I may warrantably obſerve how much
the viſible ſtate of the world correſponds with
the ſcripture declarations on this ſubject. I hope
this will be neither unſuitable nor unprofitable

* Iſ. xliv. 3, 4. † Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27.

conſidering what an inward averſion men have to receive and apply them. Do we not daily ſee many inſtances of perſons, of firſt rate underſtandings and great natural abilities, who yet continue blind to their duty to God, and the ſalvation of their ſouls? As they are born, ſo they continue to ſhew themſelves through their whole lives, "wiſe to do evil but to do good "they have no knowledge." What proofs do they often give of the power and influence of habits of wickedneſs over them? How frequently does it happen, that their attachment to ſin in general, or to ſome particular ſin, is ſuch, as to bear down before, it all regard to their own intereſt, temporal and eternal? While at the ſame time perſons of unſpeakably inferior talents, enlightened by the ſpirit, and ſanctified by the grace of God, ſhall ſtand firm againſt the moſt dangerous temptations, and eſcape the pollution that is in the world through luſt. This our bleſſed Lord adores as a part or proof of the ſovereignty and unſearchable wiſdom of his heavenly Father. "In that hour Jeſus rejoiced in ſpirit, and ſaid, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and "earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from "the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them "unto babes: even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed "good in thy ſight *."

* Luke x. 21.

Is it not plain, that ſuperior advantages of inſtruction, though very valuable, are far from being always effectual? Sometimes thoſe who live long under the ſalutary inſtruction and edifying example of pious parents and maſters, continue, notwiſtanding, in an inſenſible ſtate. Sometimes we ſee perſons ſit long under the moſt enlightening and awakening miniſtry, with hearts as hard as the neither millſtone. The caſe of the ordinary hearers of the goſpel is indeed often affecting, and leads to ſerious meditation on the depths of the divine counſels. Suffer me to beſpeak the readers of this claſs in the following terms. Are not many of you a wonder to yourſelves, as well as to one another? Is not your danger often pointed out to you in the cleareſt manner? Is not your character drawn and diſtinguiſhed by the moſt undeniable marks? Are not your duty and intereſt ſet before you in ſuch a manner, that it cannot be contradicted, and there is nothing left to reply? And yet after all, though there may be ſome weak or temporary reſolutions, it is without any real or laſting effect. Doth not this ratify and confirm the following paſſage of ſcripture? "Who then "is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by "whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos wa-

" tered, but God gave the increaſe. So then, " neither is he that planteth any thing, neither " he that watereth, but God that giveth the " increaſe *."

To abſent altogether from the ordinances of God is a dreadful and dangerous thing, for it leads directly to a ſtate of total blindneſs and undiſturbed ſecurity. I have often thought, however, that the caſe of many who continue to give their attendance is much more wonderful. Are there not habitual drunkards often ſeen in the houſe of God? Are there not ſome prophane ſwearers often ſeen in the houſe of God? Are there not ſome who walk in the luſt of uncleanneſs? ſome who retain, without reſtitution, unrighteous gain, whom approaching death, the wrath of God, and the fire of hell cannot terrify? Of ſuch, we may juſtly ſay with the apoſtle Paul, " But if our goſpel be hid, it is " hid to them that are loſt, in whom the God " of this world hath blinded the minds of them " which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious " goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God, " ſhould ſhine unto them†."

Let it be further conſidered, how much providential warnings are generally deſpiſed, even when they are ſo awful in their nature, and ſo clear in their meaning, that one would think

* 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6, 7. † 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

nothing

nothing but an abſolute infatuation could prevent their effect. Sinners may keep themſelves from hearing the word of God, and from any ſuch reading or converſation as will bring eternity in their view. But he viſits them in their families or in their perſons, and they cannot fly from theſe terrible things in righteouſneſs, by which he pleads his cauſe from day to day. Are not the young and beautiful ſoon carried to their graves? Are not the great and noble ſoon humbled in the duſt? Have not ſenſuality and riot, impurity and luſt, ſlain their victims, and raiſed up monuments fraught with moral inſtruction in every age? How long is it ago ſince Solomon ſaid, "Whoredom and wine, and "new wine, take away the heart? And of a harlot, "She hath caſt down many wounded, "and many ſtrong men have been ſlain by her. "Her houſe is the way to hell, going down to "the chambers of death *." But though uninſpired writers have ſaid this as well as he; nay, though it is viſible to all, have men become wiſe? Have they ſhunned the paths of the deſtroyer? No: we may juſtly ſay of the preſent times, as the Pſalmiſt David ſaid many ages ago, "This their way is their folly; yet their "poſterity approve their ſayings †." Nothing,

* Prov. vii. 26, 27. † Pſ. xlix. 13,

nothing will change them, till the Spirit of God rouſe and awaken the conſcience, powerfully conſtrain the will, and effectually renew the heart.

Hence then it appears, that the new birth is a "ſupernatural change;" it is the effect of the power of God; it is the work of the Holy Ghoſt. I have been at the more pains to eſtabliſh this truth, becauſe I am perſuaded, that until it be truly received, there may be a form, but there can be nothing of the power of godlineſs. But we muſt now vindicate it from the objections and abuſe, to which it may be thought liable. There are many who ſtill harbour in their minds, and ſometimes produce in converſation, the objection mentioned by the apoſtle Paul; "Thou wilt ſay then unto me, Why "doth he yet find fault for who hath reſiſted "his will *?" This, indeed, is the ſum of all the objections that ever were, or ever can be offered againſt it: and I make the ſhort anſwer of the ſame apoſtle; "Nay but O man! who "art thou that replieſt againſt God?" This is but making or imagining an inconſiſtency between two things, both of which God hath clearly eſtabliſhed and inſeparably joined in his word. Theſe are, his own power neceſſary to the change, and our duty in the uſe of the

* Rom. ix. 19.

means;

means; or rather, our ſin while continuing at enmity with him, and refuſing his mercy.

I make no ſcruple to acknowledge, that it is impoſſible for me; nay, I find no difficulty in ſuppoſing, that it is impoſſible for any finite mind to point out the bounds between the "dependence" and "activity" of the creature. But though we muſt ever remember, that it is he alone who can "bring a clean thing out of an unclean," yet we know alſo, that "all have ſinned and come "ſhort of the glory of God." We know that "God will be juſt when he ſpeaketh, and clear "when he judgeth:" that he rejects with diſdain the imputation of being the author of ſin. "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted "of evil, neither tempteth he any man*." For our greater aſſurance of this, he hath condeſcended to confirm it by his oath. "As I "live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure "in the death of the wicked, but that the "wicked turn from his way and live: turn "ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why "will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael†?" The connexion between this and the former truth appears plainly in the following paſſage: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have "life ‡."

* James i. 13. † Ezek. xxxiii. 11. ‡ John v. 40.

Perhaps alſo, there are ſome who abuſe this doctrine to ſloth and negligence. At leaſt they may pretend this, as an excuſe or palliation of their contempt of religion. But is it not an inference directly contrary to what the ſcripture teaches us much more juſtly to draw from the ſame truth, viz. "Work out your own ſalva-"tion with fear and trembling; for it is God "that worketh in you to will and to do of "his good pleaſure. *" The former inference would be juſt in the caſe of devils, who, having received their ſentence, can only now "believe and tremble:" but it would be altogether unjuſt, and a dreadful contempt of mercy in thoſe, to whom the offer of ſalvation by grace is addreſſed. What is now tranſacting in the miniſtry of the goſpel, ſhall contribute at laſt to ſtop every mouth, and put this criminal excuſe to eternal ſilence. Suppoſe the ſinner at the judgment-ſeat to offer this defence for himſelf: "I was altogether under the power of cor-"ruption; it was impoſſible for me to do any "thing of myſelf." Is it not natural to reply, "Where learned you this?" From the holy ſcriptures. "And did not the ſame ſcriptures "alſo tell you, Him that cometh to me, I "will in no wiſe caſt out. Wherefore he is "able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come

* Phil. ii. 13, 14.

"to

" to God through him.—Believe in the Lord " Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved." But I could not reconcile one ſcripture to another. " And was that any way wonderful? or can it " poſſibly juſtify your rebellion againſt the plain- " eſt commands, that you was not able fully to " comprehend what is ſaid of the abſolute " dominion and ſovereignty of God?"

Let us therefore ſettle it in our minds, that, though we are of ourſelves utterly unable to produce a change in our hearts, " nothing is impoſſible with G O D." He firſt made them, and he is able to reform them. On a conviction of our own inability, one would think we ſhould but the more humbly and the more earneſtly apply to him who is all-ſufficient in power and grace. The deplorable, and naturally helpleſs ſtate of ſinners, doth not hinder exhortations to them in ſcripture; and therefore, takes not away their obligation to duty. See an addreſs, where the ſtrongeſt metaphors are retained, the exhortation given in theſe very terms, and the foundation of the duty plainly pointed out. " Where- " fore he ſaith, awake thou that ſleepeſt, and " ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give " thee light*." From which it is very plain, that the moral inability, under which ſinners now lie, as a conſequence of the fall, is not of

* Eph. v. 14.

ſuch a nature, as to take away the guilt of ſin, the propriety of exhortations to duty, or the neceſſity of endeavours after recovery.

But what ſhall we ſay? Alas! the very ſubject we are now ſpeaking of affords a new proof of the blindneſs, prejudice, and obſtinacy of ſinners. They are ſelf-condemned; for they do not act the ſame part in ſimilar caſes. The affairs of the preſent life are not managed in ſo preposterous a manner. He that ploughs his ground, and throws in his ſeed, cannot ſo much as unite one grain to the clod; nay, he is not able to conceive how it is done. He cannot carry on, nay, he cannot ſo much as begin one ſingle ſtep of this wonderful proceſs toward the ſubſequent crop; the mortification of the ſeed, the reſurrection of the blade, and gradual increaſe, till it come to perfect maturity. Is it, therefore, reaſonable that he ſhould ſay, I for my part can do nothing. It is, firſt and laſt, an effect of divine power and energy. And God can as eaſily raiſe a crop without ſowing as with it, in a ſingle inſtant, and in any place, as in a long time, by the mutual influence of ſoil and ſeaſon; I will therefore ſpare myſelf the hardſhip of toil and labour, and wait with patience, till I ſee what he will be pleaſed to ſend. Would this be madneſs? Would it be univerſally

ſally reputed ſo? And would it not be equal madneſs to turn the grace of God into licentiouſneſs? Believe it, the warning is equally reaſonable and equally neceſſary, in ſpiritual as in temporal things: "Be not deceived, God is not "mocked, for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that "ſhall he alſo reap: for he that ſoweth to his "fleſh ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but he "that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit "reap life everlaſting*."

* Gal. vi. 7, 8.

CHAP. II.

In which is ſhewn wherein this change doth properly and directly conſiſt, and what are its principal evidences and fruits.

SECT. I.

Wherein the change in regeneration doth properly and directly conſiſt.

I Have hitherto, by general remarks, endeavoured to caution the reader againſt taking up with erroneous and defective views of the nature of religion. We now proceed a ſtep farther: and I would willingly point out, in as diſtinct a manner as I am able, what is the change which is wrought in all, without exception, who are the real children of God, by whatever means it is brought about: what it is in the temper and diſpoſition, in the life and practice, which conſtitutes the difference between one who "is," and one who is "not born again." The different ſteps by which this change may be effected in the ſovereign providence of God, and the different degrees of perfection at which it may arrive, I purpoſely omit here, and reſerve as the ſubject of a diſtinct head of diſcourſe.

That

That we may enter on the ſubject with the greater perſpicuity and ſimplicity, it will be proper to begin with obſerving, that the deſign and purpoſe of this change is to repair the loſs which man ſuſtained by the fall. Man, at his firſt creation, was made after the image of God in knowledge, righteouſneſs, and holineſs, and enjoyed uninterrupted fellowſhip and communion with him. He was not only ſubſervient to the divine glory, by a natural and neceſſary ſubjection to the divine dominion, which all creatures are, have been, and ever will be, but by choice and inclination, his duty and delight being invariably the ſame. By the fall he became not only obnoxious to the divine diſpleaſure, by a ſingle act of tranſgreſſion, but diſobedient to the divine will in his habitual and prevailing inclination. This is the character given not of one man only, but of the human race. "And God ſaw that the wickedneſs of "man was great in the earth, and that every "imagination of the thoughts of his heart was "only evil continually *."

He became, at the ſame time, not only unworthy of, but wholly diſinclined to, communion with God, and habitually prefers the creature before the Creator, who is "God bleſſed for "evermore." In regeneration, therefore, the ſinner muſt be reſtored to the image of God,

* Gen. vi. 5.

which,

which, in a created nature, is but another expreſſion for obedience to his will. He muſt alſo be reſtored to the exerciſe of love to him, and find his happineſs and comfort in him. His habitual temper, his prevailing diſpoſition, or that which hath the aſcendency, muſt be the ſame that was perfect and without mixture, before the fall, and ſhall be made equally, or perhaps more perfect, in heaven after death.

As the change muſt be entire and univerſal, correſponding to the corruption of the whole man, it is not unuſual to ſay, it may be fully comprehended in the three following things, giving a new direction to the underſtanding, the will, and the affections. And no doubt, with reſpect to every one of theſe, there is a remarkable and ſenſible change. But as the underſtanding is a natural faculty, which becomes good or evil juſt as it is applied or employed, it would be ſcarce poſſible to illuſtrate the change in it without introducing, at the ſame time, a view of the diſpoſition and tendency of the heart and affections. As, therefore, the change is properly of a moral or ſpiritual nature, it ſeems to me properly and directly to conſiſt in theſe two things, 1. That our ſupreme and chief end be to ſerve and glorify God, and that every other aim be ſubordinate to this. 2. That the ſoul reſt in God as its chief happineſs, and habitually prefer his favour to every

every other enjoyment. Theſe two particulars I ſhall now endeavour to illuſtrate a little, in the order in which I have named them.

1. Our ſupreme and chief end muſt be to ſerve and glorify God, and every other aim muſt be ſubordinate to this.

All things were originally made, and are daily preſerved for, nay, they ſhall certainly in the iſſue tend to, the glory of God; that is, the exerciſe and illuſtration of divine perfection. With this great end of creation the inclination and will of every intelligent creature ought to coincide. It is, according to ſcripture and reaſon, the firſt duty of man to "give unto the Lord the glory "due unto his name." This, I know, the world that lieth in wickedneſs can neither underſtand nor approve. "The natural man receiveth not "the things of the Spirit of God, for they are "fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know "them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned*." The truth is, we ought not to be ſurpriſed to find it ſo, for in this the ſin of man originally conſiſted, and in this the nature of all ſin, as ſuch, doth ſtill conſiſt, viz. withdrawing the allegiance due to God, and refuſing ſubjection to his will. The language of every unrenewed heart, and the language of every ſinner's practice is, "Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?" But he

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

that

that is renewed and born again, hath ſeen his own entire dependance upon God, hath ſeen his Maker's right of dominion, and the obligation upon all his creatures to be, in every reſpect, ſubſervient to his glory, and without reſerve ſubmiſſive to his will. He hath ſeen this to be moſt "fit" and "reaſonable," becauſe of the abſolute perfection and infinite excellence of the divine nature. He is convinced that all prefering of our will to that of God, is a criminal uſurpation by the creature of the unalienable rights of the great Creator and ſovereign proprietor of all.

Regeneration, then, is communicating this new principle, and giving it ſuch force as it may obtain and preſerve the aſcendency, and habitually govern the will. Every one may eaſily ſee the different operation and effects of this principle and its oppoſite by the different carriage and behaviour of men in the world. The unrenewed man ſeeks his own happineſs immediately and ultimately: it is to pleaſe himſelf that he conſtantly aims. This is the cauſe, the uniform cauſe of his preferring one action to another. This determines his choice of employment, enjoyments, companions. His religious actions are not choſen, but ſubmitted to, through fear of worſe. He conſiders religion as a reſtraint, and the divine law as hard and ſevere. So that a ſhort and ſummary

mary deſcription may be given of man in his natural ſtate. That he hath forgotten his ſubjection, that God is dethroned, and ſelf honoured, loved, and ſerved in his room.

This account will appear to be juſt, from every view given us in ſcripture of our ſtate and character, before or after converſion. It appears very clearly, from the firſt condition required by our Saviour of his diſciples, viz. ſelf-denial. "Then ſaid Jeſus to his diſciples, If any man "will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and "take up his croſs, and follow me *." All thoſe who are brought back to a ſenſe of their duty and obligation as creatures, are ready to ſay, not with their tongues only, but with their hearts, "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honour, "and power, for thou haſt created all things, and "for thy pleaſure they are and were created †." It ought to be attended to what is the import of this, when ſpoken from conviction. They not only conſider God as being moſt great, and therefore to be feared, but as infinitely holy, as abſolutely perfect, and therefore to be loved and ſerved. They eſteem all his commands concerning all things to be right. Their own remaining corruption is known, felt, and confeſſed to be wrong. This law in their members, warring againſt the law of God in their minds, is often deeply la-

* Matt. xvi. 24. † Rev. iv. 11.

mented,

mented, and, by the grace of God, ſtrenuouſly and habitually reſiſted.

Perhaps the attentive reader may have obſerved, that I have ſtill kept out of view our own great intereſt in the ſervice of God. The reaſon is, there is certainly, in every renewed heart, a ſenſe of duty, independant of intereſt. Were this not the caſe, even ſuppoſing a deſire of reward, or fear of puniſhment, ſhould diſpoſe to obedience, it would plainly be only a change of life, and no change of heart. At the ſame time, as it did not ariſe from any inward principle, it would neither be uniform nor laſting. It is beyond all queſtion, indeed, that our true intereſt is inſeparable from our duty, ſo that ſelf-ſeeking is ſelf-loſing; but ſtill a ſenſe of duty muſt have the precedency, otherwiſe it changes its nature, and is, properly ſpeaking, no duty at all.

To honour God in the heart, then, and to ſerve him in the life, is the firſt and higheſt deſire of him that is born again. This is is not, and cannot be the caſe, with any in a natural ſtate.—But, before we proceed to the other particular implied in this change, it will not be improper to make an obſervation, which I hope will have the greater weight, when the foundation of it is freſh in the reader's mind. Hence may be plainly ſeen the reaſon why prophane and worldly men have ſuch a tendency to ſelf-righteouſneſs, while the truly pious

pious are filled with an abhorrence of that ſoul-deſtroying falſehood. This, I dare ſay, appears ſtrange to many, as I confeſs it hath often done to me, before I had thought fully upon the ſubject: that thoſe who evidently are none of the ſtricteſt in point of morals, and have leaſt of that kind to boaſt of, ſhould yet be the moſt profeſſed admirers and defenders of the doctrine of juſtification by works, and deſpiſers of the doctrine of the grace of God. But the ſolution is eaſy and natural. Worldly men have no juſt ſenſe of their natural and unalienable obligation to glorify God in their thoughts, words, and actions, and therefore all that they do in religion, they look upon as a meritorious ſervice, and think that certainly ſomething is due to them on that account. They think it ſtrange if they have walked ſoberly, regularly and decently, eſpecially if they have been ſtrict and punctual in the forms of divine worſhip, that God ſhould not be obliged (pardon the expreſſion) to reward them according to their works. It is a hard ſervice to them, they do it only that they may be rewarded, or at leaſt may not ſuffer for the neglect of it, and therefore cannot but inſiſt upon the merit of it.

On the other hand, thoſe who are born of God, are ſenſible that it is the duty of every rational creature to love God with all his heart, and to conſecrate all his powers and faculties to his Maker's

Maker's ſervice. They are convinced that, whoever ſhould do ſo without ſin, would do only what is juſt and equal, and have no plea of merit to advance. But when they conſider how many ſins ſtill cleave to them, how far ſhort they come of their duty in every inſtance, they aſk for mercy, and not for reward, and are ready to ſay with the Pſalmiſt David, "If thou, Lord, ſhould "mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand: "but there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou "mayeſt be feared*." To ſum up this reaſoning in a few words. The reluctant obedience which ſome pay to the divine law, is conſidered as a debt charged upon God; whereas real obedience is conſidered as a debt due to God. And therefore it muſt always hold, that the very imperfection of an obedience itſelf increaſes our diſpoſition to overvalue and reſt our dependance upon it.

SECT. II.

The ſecond part of this change.

THE next thing implied in a ſaving change is, that the ſoul reſts in God as its chief happineſs, and habitually prefers his favour to every other enjoyment. On this branch of the ſubject I would beg the reader to obſerve, not

* Pſal. cxxx. 3, 4.

only

only the meaning and ſubſtance of the propoſition, but the order in which it is placed. There muſt be firſt a devotedneſs of mind to God, and a ſupreme leading concern for his honour and glory. He muſt be, if I may ſo ſpeak, again reſtored to his original right, his dominion and throne, while the creature is reduced to its obedience and ſubjection. In conſequence of this, there is an unfeigned acquieſcence in God, as the ſource of comfort, and a high eſteem of his favour as better than life. This does not go before, nay, is hardly diſtinct or ſeparated from, a ſenſe of duty, but is founded upon it, and grows out of it. When a holy ſoul has ſeen the infinite excellence and glory of the true God, loves him ſupremely, and is devoted to him entirely, he alſo delights in him ſuperlatively.

Such a perſon is fully convinced that thoſe, and thoſe alone are happy, whoſe God is the Lord, and that thoſe who are afar off from him ſhall certainly periſh. In a natural ſtate, as the ſure conſequence of ſin, the tranſgreſſor flies from God, with a dread and horror of his preſence. But the renewed ſoul returns to him with deſire, and feels an uneaſineſs and want that cannot be ſupplied but by the intimation of pardon, and ſenſe of divine love. The warmth and fervor of devout affection is expreſſed in the ſtrongeſt terms in ſcripture: "As the hart panteth after the

"water-

" water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, " O God. My ſoul thirſteth for God, for the " living God, when ſhall I come and appear " before God *. Becauſe thy loving-kindneſs " is better than life, my lips ſhall praiſe thee. " Thus will I bleſs thee while I live, I will lift " up my hands in thy name, my ſoul ſhall be " ſatisfied as with marrow and fatneſs, and my " mouth ſhall praiſe thee with joyful lips†."

It is neceſſary that ſerving and delighting in God ſhould be joined together on a double account. Their influence on one another is reciprocal. It is not eaſy to diſtinguiſh a conſcientious ſtudy to ſerve and glorify God, from a ſlaviſh obedience through fear of divine power, but by its being inſeparably connected with a delight in God, as the choice of the heart, and centre of the affections. On the other hand, it is hard to diſtinguiſh cleaving to God as our portion and happineſs, from an intereſted mercenary bargain in religion, but by its being preceded by, founded upon, nay, even reſolved into, a ſenſe of the ſupreme honour due to God for his infinite excellence. This reaſonable ſervice will then be attended with an unſpeakable ſweetneſs and complacency, and the all-ſufficiency of God will be an unſhaken ſecurity for the happineſs and peace of thoſe who put their truſt in him.

* Pſal. xlii. 1, 2. † Pſal. lxiii. 3, 4, 5.

We

We may often obſerve theſe two diſpoſitions jointly exerting themſelves, and mutually ſtrengthening one another, in the language and exerciſes of the ſaints in ſcripture. With what fervour of ſpirit, and with what inimitable force and beauty of ſtile, do we find the Pſalmiſt David expreſſing himſelf in both views. Sometimes he makes a full ſurrender of himſelf and his all to the divine ſervice and diſpoſal; at other times his ſoul "makes her boaſt in God," and he exults in his happineſs and ſecurity under the divine protection: "O my ſoul, thou haſt ſaid unto the "Lord, Thou art my Lord *.—The Lord is "the portion of mine inheritance, and of my "cup, thou maintaineſt my lot; the lines are "fallen to me in pleaſant places, yea, I have a "goodly heritage †."

Theſe two things are, indeed, often ſo intimately united, that we are at a loſs to know whether we ſhould interpret the language of the ſacred writers as a profeſſion of duty, or an expreſſion of delight, as in the following words: "I will ſing unto the Lord as long as I live, I "will ſing praiſe unto my God while I have my "being.—My meditation of him ſhall be ſweet, "I will be glad in the Lord ‡." How deeply the Pſalmiſt was penetrated with a ſenſe of the honour and ſervice due to God, may be particu-

* Pſal. xvi. 2. † Pſal. xvi. 5, 6. ‡ Pſal. civ. 33, 34.

larly

larly ſeen in ſome of thoſe animated paſſages in which his enlarged heart calls upon every creature to join in the work of praiſe: "Bleſs the "Lord ye his angels, that excel in ſtrength, "that do his commandments, hearkening to the "voice of his word. Bleſs ye the Lord all ye "his hoſts, ye miniſters of his that do his plea-"ſure. Bleſs the Lord all his works, in all "places of his dominion. Bleſs the Lord, O "my ſoul*."

It is eaſy to ſee how this diſtinguiſhes the natural from the new-born ſoul; nay, it is eaſy to ſee how this diſtinguiſhes the man who is renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, from all others, however various their characters, however different or oppoſite their purſuits. The deſign of man's creation is expreſſed in the Aſſembly's Shorter Catechiſm, in a way that can ſcarce be altered for the better: it was, that he might glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." As he departed from his duty by ſin, ſo alſo, at the ſame time, from his happineſs. As he refuſed to do the will of God, ſo he no more ſought his favour, but placed his happineſs and comfort in the creature "more than the Creator, who is "God bleſſed for ever." All unrenewed perſons, in one ſhape or another, place their ſupreme happineſs in ſomething that is not God.

* Pſal. ciii. 20, 21, 22.

In

In this one circumſtance they all agree, though the different forms which the world puts on to ſolicit their affection, the different degrees in which they proſecute it, and the different ways in which they apply or abuſe it, are ſo very many, that it is impoſſible to enumerate or deſcribe them. Though there is but one God, the idols of the nations are innumerable. There is but one way to peace, and if that is neglected, the unſatisfactory nature of all created enjoyments makes men fly from one earthly comfort to another, till they feel, by late experience, the vanity of them all. Their ſtate is juſtly deſcribed by the wiſe man, when he ſays, "Lo this only have "I found, that God made man upright, but "they have ſought out many inventions *."

It may not be improper here, juſt to hint at a few of the principal purſuits by which the characters of men are diverſified, their hearts and cares divided, and the one thing needful forgotten and diſregarded. Some there are who yield themſelves up to the unreſtrained indulgence of pleaſure. Senſual appetite and paſſion carry them on with unbridled fury. The luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life, poſſeſs their affections, and their prevailing deſire is to gratify theſe appetites, as far as their ſituation and circumſtances enable them, or the rival purſuits of

* Eccleſ. vii. 29.

others will permit them. This, which is uſually the firſt attempt of unſanctified and ungoverned youth, is well deſcribed by the wiſe man, in the following ſtrong caution againſt it: "Rejoice, "O young man, in thy youth, and let thine "heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and "walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight "of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all "theſe things God will bring thee into judg-"ment *." This is the path of the abandoned and heaven-daring profligate, who caſts off all fear of God, who burſts aſunder every bond, "who draws iniquity with cords of vanity, and "ſins as it were with a cart-rope."

Again, There are ſome whoſe hearts are ſet upon preſent gain. Inſtead of making that ſober and moderate uſe of this world and its enjoyments, which becometh mortal creatures, they look upon it as their home. Inſtead of conſidering it only as a mean to a higher end, they have it as their chief or principal view, to ſecure or enlarge their poſſeſſion of it. Theſe "ſay to "the gold, Thou art my refuge, and to the fine "gold, Thou art my confidence."—They think their "houſes will endure for ever, and their "dwelling-places to all generations." This is often the ſin of riper years: and, that the brutiſh folly of ſinners may more eminently ſhow itſelf,

* Eccleſ. xi. 9.

it

it is often the reproach and ſcandal of old age, when its abſurdity is moſt ſenſible and apparent. What doth it ſignify how much men of this character deſpiſe the levity of youth, or hate the filthy receptacles of ſenſuality and luſt, while their affections are ſupremely ſet upon the preſent world, while "they bleſs the covetous, whom "the Lord abhorreth?"

It is often ſufficient to raiſe in every ſerious perſon a mixture of compaſſion and indignation, to hear thoſe with whom poverty is the only crime, openly pleading for, and boaſting of, their attachment to the world, or treating with a ſmile of contempt thoſe who tell them, from the word of God, that it is vain. Though nothing is more frequently confirmed by experience, it is uſual to conſider this as only pulpit declamation, a part of our buſineſs and profeſſion, but containing a maxim that cannot be applied to common life. Let all ſuch be informed, whether they will hear it or not, that, however regular and abſtemious they may be as to all ſenſual indulgence, however diligent, eager, and ſucceſsful in trade, "except "they be born again, they cannot ſee the king-"dom of God." And, that they may not deceive themſelves, but know in part at leaſt wherein this change conſiſteth, let them peruſe and ponder the following paſſage of the apoſtle John: "Love not the world, neither the things that

" are in the world: if any man love the world,
" the love of the Father is not in him *."

Once more. There are ſome who walk in the path of ambition. Pride and vain glory is the idol at whoſe ſhrine they bow. Theſe, indeed, may be divided into very different claſſes. Pride, which may be called the maſter-paſſion of the human frame, takes in the moſt extenſive and univerſal range. There is ſcarce any ſtate in which it is not able to exert itſelf, ſcarce any circumſtance which it is not able to convert into the means of its own gratification. All natural advantages which men enjoy over others, whether in reſpect of body or mind; all the additional trappings of ſociety, viz. wealth, ſtation, and office; all acquired advantages, intellectual, or even moral, become the fuel of pride. As ſome endeavour by extraordinary actions to ſpread their fame in public life, others though in a narrower ſphere, are under the habitual government of the ſame deſire. While great men are taking cities, and deſtroying kingdoms, to get themſelves a name, others of meaner rank are vying with one another in dreſs, furniture, and epuipage, or ſuch inferior arts as they have been able to attain. Nay, thoſe who never did any thing that could merit praiſe, too often ſhew themſelves under the government of the moſt hateful and deteſted kind

* 1 John ii. 15.

of

of ambition, by a rancorous malice and envy againſt ſuch as excel or outſhine them. We may go a ſtep farther, and ſay there is great reaſon to believe, that in ſome the cultivation of their minds long and aſſiduous application to ſtudy, zealous and ſucceſsful endeavours to promote the public good, ought to be aſcribed to no other ſource, to no higher motive.

I thought I could not fall upon any way to illuſtrate this part of my ſubject, which would make it more intelligible than to give this ſhort view of the characters and purſuits of the men of the world; and then to obſerve, That the change in regeneration doth properly conſiſt in a ſtrong inward conviction of the vanity of worldly enjoyments of every kind; and a perſuaſion, that the favour and enjoyment of God is infinitely ſuperior to them all. Whatever other differences there may be, this will be found in every child of God, from the higheſt to the loweſt, from the richeſt to the pooreſt; from the wiſeſt to the moſt ignorant; and from the oldeſt to the youngeſt. Every ſuch one will be able to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "There be many that "ſay, Who will ſhew us any good? Lord, "lift thou up the light of thy countenance "upon us. Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, "more than in the time that their corn and "their wine increaſed. I will both lay me

" down in peace, and ſleep, for thou, Lord, only " makeſt me dwell in ſafety*."

I ſhall afterwards have occaſion more fully to explain the comparative influence of this deſire; but before I conclude this ſection, muſt make the two following remarks: 1. That the favour of God muſt appear to the believer as abſolutely neceſſary to his comfort. 2. As full and ſufficient for that purpoſe.

1. He that is born again, conſiders the favour of God as abſolutely neceſſary to his comfort. He ſees the emptineſs and inherent vanity of all things elſe. Even when the world ſmiles, even when things ſucceed with him to his wiſh, he will not reſt ſatisfied with any, or all temporal mercies. He will, above all, deſire an intereſt in that love which God beareth to his " choſen people;" a right by promiſe or covenant to the uſe of preſent comforts, and the favour and protection of his ſpecial providence. How contrary this to the temper of many, who have a name to live while they are dead? If the world ſmiles, they follow it with eagerneſs, and embrace it with complacency, while they are cold and indifferent in their deſires towards God. Perhaps when they are diſtreſſed with outward calamities; when experience conſtrains them to confeſs the vanity of the creature, they

* Pſ. iv. 6, 7, 8.

cry

cry to God for relief. But when eaſe and proſperity return they ſoon forget his works, are well pleaſed with their condition, and neither grieve for his abſence, nor are afraid of his anger. This ſhews plainly, that whatever occaſional ſymptoms they may diſcover, they are ſupremely and habitually poſſeſſed by a love of the world, and deſire of ſenſual gratification. In oppoſition to this, every real chriſtian ſees the favour of God to be ſo abſolutely neceſſary, that he cannot be without it. He ſees it to be more neceſſary than riches, honours or pleaſures; nay, than health, or even life itſelf; all which he values chiefly as they are the fruits of the divine bounty, as tokens of divine love, and as they afford him an opportunity of promoting the divine glory. He is ready to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and "there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee: "my fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the "ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever*."

2. He that is born again, conſiders the favour of God as full and ſufficient for his comfort and happineſs. That is to ſay, he is habitually ſatisfied with this as his portion, whether there be abundance or ſtraitneſs as to outward proviſion. He counts the favour of God as abſolutely neceſſary, but nothing elſe is conſidered as ſuch. No earthly enjoyments can ſa-

* Pſ. lxxiii. 25, 26.

tisfy him without God's favour; but this will ſatisfy him, be his outward condition what it will. I am far from meaning to affirm, that every good man is free from the leaſt riſing murmur, the leaſt impatient or rebellious thought. If it were ſo with any man, he would be perfect in holineſs; but I mean to ſignify, that this is his habitual and prevailing temper. He is inwardly convinced, that thoſe alone are happy; and that they are, and ſhall be, compleatly happy, who are reconciled to God, and the objects of his ſpecial love. His own remaining attachment to preſent things, and immoderate ſorrow under outward calamity, he ſincerely laments as his weakneſs, and humbly confeſſes as his ſin. He endeavours to ſupply the void left by every earthly comfort, when it is withdrawn, by the fulneſs and all-ſufficiency of God. He poſſeſſes, in ſome meaſure, and breathes after more and more of the temper expreſſed in the two following paſſages of ſcripture: "Al-
"though my houſe be not ſo with God, yet
"he hath made with me an everlaſting cove-
"nant, ordered in all things, and ſure; for
"this is all my ſalvation, and all my deſire *."
"Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, nei-
"ther ſhall fruit be in the vines; the labour
"of the olive ſhall fail, and the field ſhall yield

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

"no

" no meat; the flock ſhall be cut off from the " fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; " yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in " the God of my ſalvation *."

Thus I have endeavoured to point out wherein the change in regeneration doth immediately and properly conſiſt. It is juſt the recovery of the moral image of God upon the heart; that is to ſay, to love him ſupremely, and ſerve him ultimately, as our higheſt end; and to delight in him ſuperlatively, as our chief good. This recovery, however, is but begun on earth. It is gradually improved in the progreſs of ſanctification, and ſhall be fully compleated at the reſurrection of the juſt. The ſum of the moral law is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and ſoul, and ſtrength, and mind. This is the duty of every rational creature; and, in order to obey it perfectly, no part of our inward affection or actual ſervice ought to be, at any time, or in the leaſt degree, miſapplied. This is the caſe with no mere man, while he continues in the body. But regeneration conſiſts in the principle being implanted, obtaining the aſcendency, and habitually prevailing over its oppoſite. Even in thoſe who are born again, there will ſtill be many ſtruggles betwen the " law " of ſin in their members," and the " law

* Habbak. iii. 17, 18.

" of God in their minds." This we find deeply lamented by the apoſtle Paul: " O wretched " man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from " the body of this death* ?" It ought to give unſpeakable conſolation to the chriſtian, when he reflects, that the ſeed which is planted by divine grace, ſhall be preſerved by divine power. A gracious God will neither ſuffer it to be ſmothered by contending weeds, nor deſtroyed by the inclemency of this tempeſtuous climate, till it be tranſplanted into the milder regions of peace and ſerenity above.

SECT. III.

The effects of regeneration; with ſome of the principal evidences of its ſincerity.

IN the further proſecution of this head, I propoſed to mention ſome of the principal evidences and fruits of a ſaving change. Theſe, no doubt, it were eaſy with ſufficient propriety greatly to extend and enlarge, becauſe they include all the marks and ſigns of real religion, ſuited to every character and every ſituation in which a chriſtian can be placed. The heart being renewed, the life will of neceſſity be reformed, and holineſs in all manner of converſation, including the duties of piety towards God, and

† Rom. vii. 24.

juſtice

juſtice and charity towards men, will be its native and genuine effect. But this would be too wide and general a field. I find moſt writers on this ſubject take particular notice of the new views and apprehenſions which the regenerate perſon hath of himſelf, and every other thing or perſon to which he ſtands related. I ſhall therefore very ſhortly obſerve, he who is born again, diſcovers his new nature and life by new apprehenſions of God—of himſelf—of the world—of eternity—of Jeſus Chriſt the Saviour of ſinners—and of all the ordinances of his appointment.

The regenerate perſon has new views of God, both in reſpect of greatneſs and goodneſs. He really and inwardly believes the being, preſence, power and providence of God, which he in a great meaſure diſbelieved before. Whereas formerly, even what he did believe of God was ſeldom in his thoughts; now it is almoſt impoſſible for him to look upon any thing, or perſon, or event, without conſidering its relation to God. O what "terrible majeſty" does his ſanctified underſtanding perceive in this Being of Beings, compared to the times of his former blindneſs? What a luſtre and glory does the opened eye ſee in all the divine perfections? Above all, what a raviſhing and aſtoniſhing view has he of the divine goodneſs and love? Wicked men, go-

verned by ſelf-love, are therefore inſenſible of obligations. Inordinate in their deſires, they are never ſatisfied with their poſſeſſions: whereas the child of God diſcovers and confeſſes the infinite goodneſs of his Creator in all his mercies, of the leaſt of which he is not worthy.

He hath quite new apprehenſions of himſelf, his own character and ſtate. Before, he thought himſelf his own maſter, looked upon every religious law as a hard and tyrannical reſtraint; but now, he ſees that he belongs to God: he now remembers his Creator, confeſſes his obligations, and mourns for his tranſgreſſions. A converted ſinner often admires and ſtands aſtoniſhed at his own former conduct. He wonders at the boldneſs of a poor guilty helpleſs rebel, perhaps curſing and blaſpheming, perhaps rioting in ſenſuality and luſt. He wonders that the power of God did not arreſt him in his courſe, and by ſome ſignal ſtroke, make him a ſtanding monument of righteous indignation. He trembles to think of his former ſtate, and it excites in him a deep and lively acknowledgment of the riches of divine grace. How great a ſenſe of this does the apoſtle Paul often expreſs in his own caſe; "who was "before a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and "injurious.——This is a faithful ſaying, and "worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus

"came

" came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom " I am chief*."

The above is often connected with, and increaſed by, his views of the world and of worldly men. The charm is now broke; the falſe colours are now taken off from the world and all its enjoyments. How ardently did he love them once! how eagerly did he proſecute them! and how rich did he eſteem them! He envied every one who poſſeſſed them, and thought that none ſuch could fail of being compleatly happy. But now, he can never ſeparate the idea of riches from temptation, and often conſiders the dreadful change of ſtate in thoſe who are carried about in pomp and grandeur on earth; who are cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fare ſumptuouſly every day; but are, in a little time, tormented in hell fire. Formerly, he valued perſons by their ſtation, by their wealth, by their ſpirit and genius, or other natural qualifications. But now, a chriſtian in a cottage appears more honourable and more amiable than a blaſphemer in a palace. Now, his heart is joined to every ſervant of Chriſt, though deſpiſed in the world, though emaciated by ſickneſs, though deformed with old age; nay, though loathſome and ſordid through penury and want. He ſees the

* 1 Tim. i. 13, 15.

beauty

beauty of theſe excellent ones of the earth, under all their preſent diſadvantages, and in them is all his delight. With regard to perſons of an oppoſite character, the penitent often recollects, with a bleeding heart, his fondneſs for, and attachment to, ſinful companions; and his kindneſs to them is converted into a yearning tenderneſs and compaſſion for their miſerable ſtate.

Further, the regenerate perſon has new apprehenſions of eternity. Formerly, the ſhadows and vanities of time ſo engroſſed his thoughts, ſo filled and occupied his ſight, that eternity was ſeldom at all, and never fully in view. But now it is frequently and ſtrongly upon his mind. Now it, as it were, joins itſelf with, and points out its own relation to, every ſubject, and its concern in every purſuit. Now, it is preſent as the object of faith, to correct the falſe repreſentations of ſenſe, and to oppoſe the unjuſt claim of earthly and momentary gratifications. Formerly, things unſeen were counted in a manner precarious and fabulous, of ſmall moment in any determination: but now, there is ſuch a diſcovery of the great realities of another world, as weighs down all created things, and makes them feel as a feather in the balance.

Let us here ſtand ſtill, and pauſe a little. Let me beſeech every reader to ponder this reflection, which I cannot paſs. Oh! what concern have

have we all in everlaſting endleſs eternity! O ſubject without bounds! Who is able to do it juſtice in words? Who is able to reach it even in thought? Happineſs that ſhall continue through everlaſting ages. Miſery, anguiſh, torment, that ſhall never have an end. Are we all, without exception, to be ſo divided at laſt? Yes; the great Judge ſhall ſeparate the righteous from the wicked, and ſhall ſet the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. Shall then companions on earth; ſhall fellow-citizens, and fellow-ſoldiers; the deareſt friends and the neareſt relations, be parted aſunder, and take a long, long, eternal farewel? O the ſtrong deceit and illuſion of ſin, that is able to hide eternity from dying men! O the inconceivable blindneſs of thoſe who are unmindful of a future ſtate, while they inhabit theſe tabernacles of clay, which are ſo often tottering; which are daily waſting, and ſhall ſo ſoon fall in pieces and crumble into duſt! How is it poſſible we ſhould forget, that in a little time "we muſt all "appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt."

The regenerate perſon has alſo new views of Jeſus Chriſt, the great and only Saviour of ſinners. Before, he was "without form or come-"lineſs, or any beauty, that he ſhould deſire "him." Before, (as is, alas! the caſe with very many) all the truths, relating to the perſon,

ſon, character, and office of a Mediator, were hated as abſurdities, or deſpiſed as enthuſiaſm. They were nick-named nonſenſe, cant, and unintelligible ſtuff. Or if decency forbad this, they were altogether cold and without reliſh. But now, the name of a Saviour is "precious—even "as ointment poured forth *." The ſtrongeſt language is too weak to expreſs his gratitude, or breathe out his love. "He is white and ruddy "the chief among ten thouſand:—yea, he is "altogether lovely †." How great is the difference between the ſelf-righteous formaliſt and the humbled penitent? The one, truſting in himſelf that he his righteous, knows little of the value of a Saviour; the other, deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of guilt, and ſtrongly conſcious of abſolute weakneſs, "counts all things but loſs, for "the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Je-"ſus his Lord; and deſires to be found in him, "not having his own righteouſneſs, which is of "the law, but that which is through the faith "of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs that is of God "by faith ‡."

Again, the regenerate perſon has new views of the ordinances of Chriſt's appointment. They were formerly his burden, now they are his delight. Before the ſabbath wore, as it were, a ſable garb, and an offenſive gloom. It was look-

* Cant. i. 3. † Cant. v. 10. ‡ Phil. iii. 8.

ed

ed upon as a piece of confinement and reſtraint. He was ready to ſay, "What a wearineſs is it; "when will the ſabbath be over, and the new "moon, that we may ſet forth corn, and ſell wheat?" But now, he calls it a delight, the "holy of the "Lord, and honourable." Now, he thirſts after the water of life, eſteems, loves, and deſires the word of God. He now readily joins the holy Pſalmiſt in all theſe fervent expreſſions to be found in his writings, of affection to the truths and ordinances of God. "O how love I thy "law! it is my meditation all the day *.—— "The law of thy mouth is better to me than "thouſands of gold and ſilver †.——My ſoul "thirſteth for thee; my fleſh longeth for thee, "in a dry and thirſty land, where no water is. "To ſee thy power and thy glory, ſo as I have "ſeen it in the ſanctuary ‡——I was glad when "they ſaid unto me, let us go into the houſe "of the Lord; our feet ſhall ſtand within thy "gates, O Jeruſalem §!"

Suffer me now to conclude this general account of the ſpirit and temper of the regenerate, with a few particular characters, by which they will commonly be diſtinguiſhed.

1. The new nature will diſcover itſelf by great humility. There is no diſpoſition more the ob-

* Pſ. cxix. 97. † Pſ. cxix. 72. ‡ Pſ. lxiii. 1, 2.
§ Pſ. cxxii. 1, 2.

ject

ject of divine abhorrence and deteſtation, than pride; nor conſequently, any more amiable and neceſſary than humility. We are told, that "God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to "the humble *." To the ſame purpoſe the prophet Iſaiah, "For thus ſaith the high and "lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe "name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy "place; with him alſo that is of a contrite "and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the "humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones †." Pride was the ſin by which the angels fell from their glory and happineſs. It appears to have been the chief ingredient in the firſt ſin of man; and in general, the leading part of a ſinful character. Before there can be any ſaving change; before there can be any eſteem or reliſh of the goſpel of the grace of God, there muſt be a deep humility of mind, and thorough conviction of guilt and wretchedneſs. This muſt ſtill continue, and have a conſtant and viſible effect upon the believer's temper and carriage. The truth is the way in which a ſinner's peace is made with God, the ground on which his hope and comfort is founded, and the means of his improvement in the ſpiritual life, all conſpire in making him humble. "Where is boaſting? It is excluded. No "fleſh is permitted to glory" in the divine pre-

* James iv. 6. † Iſ. lvii. 15.

ſence.

ſence. Every ſincere penitent, every real believer, every profiting diſciple of Chriſt, learns the emptineſs of the creature, the fulneſs, ſovereignty, power, wiſdom, and grace of the Creator and Redeemer, from all that he hears, and from all that he feels.

In his former ſtate, either his ignorance of God, or his wrong views of God and of himſelf, made him ſet a high value upon his own intereſt, and think he had a high claim to happineſs, and ſucceſs of every kind. This made him repine at the courſe of providence, and very hardly allow that juſtice was done him when his attempts were defeated, or his deſires diſappointed. What ſullen impatience do many ſhew under the hand of God? What corroding envy poſſeſſes their minds when they take a view of the (perhaps miſtaken) happineſs of others? But he that is born again is deeply ſenſible, that he deſerves nothing at the hand of God. His habitual ſentiments and language, are the ſame with what we find in ſcripture ſo frequent with the ſaints: "I am not "worthy of the leaſt of all the mercies, and of "all the truth which thou haſt ſhewed unto thy "ſervant †.—It is of the Lord's mercies that we "are not conſumed, becauſe his compaſſions fail "not ‡.—Unto me, who am leſs than the leaſt "of all ſaints, is this grace given ‖." Whereas

† Gen. xxxii. 10. ‡ Lam. iii. 2. ‖ Epheſ. iii. 8.

formerly

formerly he was apt to view his own character with much complacence, and to have high thoughts of the dignity of human virtue, now he hath changed the ſtern pride of philoſophy, for the ſelf-denial and meekneſs of the goſpel. He has ſuch views of the glory and majeſty of God, of the purity of his law, and of the holineſs of his nature, that he ſinks, as it were, into nothing in his own ſight, and knows not how to throw himſelf into a low enough poſture in the divine preſence. Agreeably to this we have a ſtriking picture, drawn by our Saviour in the parable of the Phariſee and publican, of true penitence, particularly as ſtanding in oppoſition to ſelf-ſufficiency and pride: "The Phariſee ſtood and prayed thus "with himſelf, God, I thank thee, that I am not as "other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, "or even as this publican. I faſt twice in the "week, I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs. And "the publican ſtanding afar off, would not lift "up ſo much as his eyes unto heaven, but ſmote "upon his breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to "me a ſinner *."

Further, true religion makes a man humble toward his fellow-creatures, as well as toward God. The one, indeed, is the certain and neceſſary effect of the other. Every thing which one man can enjoy in preference to another,

* Luke xviii. 11, 12, 13.

and

and which ordinarily becomes the fuel of pride, is the gift of God, and therefore there is no room left to glory. What diſtinction can any man enjoy above another, but it muſt be of one of theſe two kinds, worldly advantages, or ſpiritual gifts? Now worldly advantages, are of no ſuch value, in the eye of a real Chriſtian, as to be matter of boaſting. All ſwelling on this account is effectually reſtrained by true religion: that which brings eternity in view, makes all temporal things of wonderfully little value to have or to loſe. And even ſtill leſs will a good man glory in his advantages over others of a ſpiritual kind. Pride can never be ſo greatly miſplaced, as when it ſhows itſelf here. The Chriſtian will ſay to himſelf in the words of the apoſtle Paul "For "who maketh thee to differ from another? and "what haſt thou, that thou didſt not receive? "Now if thou didſt receive it, why doſt thou "glory, as if thou hadſt not received it *?"

I cannot help alſo obſerving here, that every true convert is naturally led to conſider himſelf as the chief of ſinners, and every real Chriſtian to reckon that others are preferable to him in holineſs and ſpiritual attainments. This is often taken notice of by religious writers, in a perfect conſiſtency both with ſcripture and experience. We ſee this was the caſe with the apoſtle Paul, that

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

eminently

eminently holy, faithful, and active miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt. He expreſsly ſtiles himſelf the "chief of ſinners;" and ſays, "Howbeit, for "this cauſe I obtained mercy that in me firſt," or in me as a capital and leading inſtance, "Je-"ſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, "for a pattern to them which ſhould hereafter "believe on him to life everlaſting *." And elſewhere to the ſame purpoſe, with a view to his miniſterial labours: "For I am the leaſt of "the apoſtles, that am not meet to be called an "apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the church of "God; but, by the grace of God, I am what "I am, and his grace which was beſtowed upon "me was not in vain, but I laboured more abun-"dantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace "of God which was with me †." This is eaſy to be accounted for. Every man muſt have a far more clear diſcovery and conviction of his own ſins, in their henious nature and aggravating circumſtances, than of thoſe of any other, as well as a greater inſight into the remaining corruption of his own heart. Hence it is natural for him to conclude, that none have been ſo deeply indebted as himſelf to the riches of divine grace, for pardon and recovery.

From every view we can take of the matter, therefore, it is plain that the regenerate perſon

* 1 Tim. i. 16. † 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10.

muſt

muſt be, according to the ſtrong and beautiful language of the holy ſcripture, "clothed with "humility." He muſt be very humble: he muſt be humble in every reſpect; he muſt be inwardly, habitually, conſtantly, univerſally humble. I know no diſpoſition better fitted either to determine our character in general, or to decide when the Chriſtian is diſcharging any duty in a proper manner. It is alſo a good touchſtone by which to try a profeſſion, or apparent zeal for religion. I am ſenſible it is a duty openly to profeſs Chriſt before men, and that he has pronounced a dreadful threatening againſt thoſe who ſhall meanly deny him: "Whoſoever ſhall be "aſhamed of me, or of my words, in this adul- "terous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall "the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh "in the glory of his Father, with the holy an- "gels *." There are many of the duties of a Chriſtian which require a firm reſolution, a boldneſs and fortitude of mind; yet even this ſhould be accompanied with humility. Unneceſſary oſtentation is always a ſuſpicious ſign. A Chriſtian ſhould be conſtrained, in all ſuch caſes, by a ſenſe of duty, and enter upon his work with a diffidence of himſelf, and reliance on divine ſtrength.

* Mark viii. 38.

Let

Let not the reader think this part of the ſubject tedious, or extended beyond its due bounds; let him rather enter on a deep and careful ſearch into his own heart, and ſee how it ſtands with himſelf in this particular. There is often a counterfeit humility. A proud and vain-glorious carriage is odious to man as well as to God. Pride in one man, is always in open hoſtility againſt pride in another; nay pride, when diſcovered, effectually defeats its own purpoſe. Not only is a man who is vain of nothing, juſtly and univerſally contemptible, but in all caſes, as Solomon ſays, "for a man to ſearch his own glory, is not glory." Even the moſt eminent abilities, the moſt amiable qualifications, and the moſt laudable actions, are greatly ſullied by an apparent vanity and thirſt of praiſe. It is hardly poſſible to bring others to acknowledge that man's worth who aſſerts it with his own tongue, and abſolves the world by paying tribute to himſelf. Hence there is a remarkable obſervation of a foreign writer of eminent piety and learning, to this purpoſe, That a worldly principle, when it is attended with ſound judgment, and in its higheſt perfection, does homage to religion, by imitating its effects. And, indeed, what is all politeneſs of carriage, but a ſort of hypocritical humility, and an empty profeſſion of that deference to the judgment and kindneſs

kindneſs to the perſons of others, which a true Chriſtian hath implanted in his heart?

How ſelf-deceiving is pride! How many are there even of thoſe who have a form of godlineſs, who are wrapt up in themſelves, who would have all men to eſteem them, who would have their opinions to prevail, and their meaſures to take place, in every matter of the ſmalleſt conſequence, and are never ſatisfied but when this is the caſe? Of this they are often quite inſenſible themſelves, when every one about them perceives it without the leaſt difficulty or uncertainty. Nay, is it not very ſurpriſing and very lamentable, that there is ſtill ſo much pride to be found even in good men, which betrays itſelf by many evidences, impatience of contradiction in their ſentiments, exceſſive grief, or immoderate reſentment, when their characters are attacked by unjuſt and malicious ſlander? It is lawful, to be ſure, in ſuch a caſe, to embrace every opportunity of vindication; but, as it is not wonderful that it ſhould happen, ſo the real Chriſtian ſhould ſtudy to bear it with meekneſs, and to forgive it ſincerely, as he aſks forgiveneſs of God.

From all this it is eaſy to ſee, that the regenerate perſon muſt be humble. Believe it, O Chriſtian, ſo much as you have of humility, ſo much you have of true religion. So much as your ſentiments are altered in this reſpect, ſo much you

have ground to think the change to be real; and ſo much as you take root downwards in true humility, in the ſame proportion you will bear fruit upwards, in all the duties of a regular, exemplary, and uſeful converſation.

2. Another excellent and uſeful evidence of regeneration, is the ſanctification of natural and lawful affections. There are, perhaps, few either more ſure or more plain evidences of real religion than this. Regeneration does not conſiſt in giving us new ſouls, new faculties, or new affections, but in giving a new tendency and effect to thoſe we had before. There are many perſons to whom we bear naturally an affection, and it is far from being the deſign of religion to deſtroy this affection, but to regulate it in its meaſure, to keep it in its proper channel, and direct it to its proper end. This is a part of the ſubject which I have always thought of great moment and importance, on more accounts than one. It hath pleaſed God, by joining us together in ſociety, to conſtitute a great variety of relations; theſe ties are of God's own making, and our affections to all perſons ſo related to us are natural, and in ſome of them very ſtrong. How then do they operate? In what manner do they expreſs themſelves? Nothing will more evidently prove what is the ruling diſpoſition of the heart. Whenever we love others ſincerely, we ſhew it by

by desiring and endeavouring to procure for them those blessings which we ourselves most highly esteem. Let us take any one of these relations for an example. Does a parent sincerely love his children? Religion doth not weaken, but strengthen this affection and add to the force of his obligation to serve them. But if the parent truly loveth God above all, how will his love to his children be expressed? Surely by desiring, above all, that they may be "born again." Their following sinful courses will give him unspeakably more grief than their poverty, sickness, or even death itself. He will be more concerned to make them, and more delighted to see them, good than great; and, for this purpose, every step of their education will be directed. Would not every parent shudder at the thoughts of sending a beloved child to a house infected with the plague, or any other scene where health or life would be in imminent danger? What then shall we think of those parents who, from the single prospect of gain, without scruple, place their children in houses deeply infected with the leprosy of sin, and expose them, without the least necessity, to the most dangerous temptations?

I know there are some instances in scripture of persons who have been considered as very pious themselves, who yet were shamefully negligent in this branch of their duty. Of these Eli, men-

tioned in the book of Samuel, is one, whoſe ſons, though in the moſt ſacred office, "made themſelves vile and he reſtrained them not." I imagine I could eaſily bring in doubt, if not the reality, at leaſt the eminence of his piety, and others of the ſame kind, though often taken for granted, without much examination; but I ſhall only obſerve what an oppoſite account is given of the divine conduct toward Eli and toward Abraham, the father of the faithful. He revealed his will, and employed in his meſſage the child Samuel, to the neglect of Eli, grown old in his courts, and denounced the moſt ſevere and terrible judgments againſt him and his houſe: "Behold, I will do "a thing in Iſrael, at which both the ears of "every one that heareth it ſhall tingle; in that "day I will perform againſt Eli all things which "I have ſpoken concerning his houſe: when I "begin I will alſo make an end. For I have "told him that I will judge his houſe for ever, "for the iniquity which he knoweth *." On the contrary, ſee the honourable diſtinction put upon Abraham: "And the Lord ſaid, Shall I "hide from Abraham that thing which I do, "ſeeing that Abraham ſhall ſurely become a "great nation, and all the nations of the earth "ſhall be bleſſed in him. For I know him, that "he will command his children and his houſhold

* 1 Sam. iii. 11, 12, 13.

"after

" after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the " Lord, to do juſtice and judgment, that the " Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he " hath ſpoken of him*."

Nothing, indeed, can be more plain from reaſon itſelf, than that, in proportion to the impreſſion which parents have upon their own minds of the importance of ſalvation, will be their concern and care that their children alſo may be the heirs of everlaſting life. Suffer me to aſk every parent who reads this diſcourſe, or rather to beſeech all ſuch, to aſk themſelves ſeriouſly, what are their own ſtrongeſt deſires and hopes concerning their children? In thoſe moments when your affections are fondeſt, and your partial flattering expectations moſt diſtinctly formed, are you obliged to confeſs that your minds run much more upon the proſpect of your childrens living in affluence and ſplendor, or being promoted to places of honour and truſt, than their being brought to a ſaving acquaintance with Chriſt and him crucified, that whether they live or die they may be the Lord's? If this is the caſe, you have juſt ground to fear that you are of that unhappy number who " favour not the " things that be of God, but the things that be " of man."

* Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 19.

3. Another excellent evidence of regeneration is, the moderation of our attachment to worldly enjoyments in general, and habitual ſubmiſſion to the will of God. So ſoon as this change takes place, it will immediately and certainly abate the meaſure of our attachment to all earthly things. Formerly they were the all of the ſoul, its portion and its reſt; but now a clear diſcovery being made of greater and better bleſſings, they muſt fall back into the ſecond place. There is a wonderful difference between the rate and value of preſent poſſeſſions of any kind, in the eye of him who lives under the impreſſions of eternity, and of him who believes it but uncertainly, who underſtands it very imperfectly, and who thinks of it as ſeldom as conſcience will give him leave. It muſt be confeſſed we are all apt to be immoderate in our attachment to outward bleſſings; this is the effect and evidence of the weakneſs of our faith: but, ſo far as faith is in exerciſe, it muſt mortify carnal affection. There is no way in which an object appears ſo little, as when it is contraſted with one infinitely greater, which is plainly the caſe here. The truth is, time and eternity, things temporal and things ſpiritual, are the oppoſite and rival objects of human attention and eſteem. It is impoſſible that one of them can be exalted, or obtain influence in any heart, without a proportional depreſſion of the other. They

are

are, alſo, as they ſeverally prevail, the marks to diſtinguiſh thoſe who are, and thoſe who are not, brought again from the dead. For as the apoſtle ſays, "To be carnally minded is death, but to "be ſpiritually minded is life and peace *."

Further, it is not only in abating the meaſure of our attachment to worldly things that religion ſhews itſelf, and the change is diſcovered, but in the uſe and application of them. The real Chriſtian's powers and faculties, poſſeſſions and influence, are conſecrated to God. His abilities are laid out for the glory of God. He no more conſiders them as a means of excelling others, and getting to himſelf a name, but of doing good. He finds it his higheſt pleaſure to ſerve God with his talents; he thinks it his duty to plead for him in his converſation, to honour him with his ſubſtance, to enforce and ratify the divine laws by his authority and example.

The ſame thing ſhews plainly why a Chriſtian muſt manifeſt his new nature by ſubmiſſion to the divine will. Does he receive his mercies from God? Does he love them leſs than God? Does he eſteem it his duty to uſe them in his ſervice? And can he poſſibly refuſe to reſign them to his pleaſure? I am ſenſible that reſignation to the will of God, abſolute and unconditional, is a very difficult duty, but it is what every believer

* Rom. viii. 6.

habitually ſtudies to attain. He chides his remaining impatience and complains, grieves at the continuing ſtruggles of his imperfectly renewed will, and is ſenſible that in this the ſuperiority of his affection to God above the creature ought to appear. Unrenewed perſons, when their earthly hopes are diſappointed, immediately renew the purſuit; they only change the object to one more within their reach, or they alter their meaſures, and endeavour to amend the ſcheme; but real Chriſtians, receiving a conviction of the vanity of all created things, ſeek their refuge and conſolation in the fullneſs and all-ſufficiency of God.

SECT. IV.

A more particular enquiry into what properly conſtitutes the ſincerity of the change.

THUS I have given a ſuccinct view of the moſt remarkable effects and viſible evidences of regeneration. I cannot, however, ſatisfy myſelf with this, becauſe I am perſuaded the great queſtion is, how far they ought to go, and to what meaſure of ſtrength and uniformity they ought to arrive. There are not a few who may, in a certain degree, ſincerely think themſelves poſſeſſed of moſt or all the diſpoſitions mentioned above, whoſe ſtate is nevertheleſs very much to

be

be ſuſpected. On the other hand, perhaps, ſome of the humbleſt, that is to ſay, the very beſt, may be in much fear concerning themſelves, becauſe they do not perceive either the vigour or ſteadineſs in their holy diſpoſitions which they greatly deſire, and are ſenſible they ought to attain. Beſides, what hath been hitherto ſaid is only general, viz. that thoſe who are born again will have new apprehenſions of things, will be humble, mortified to the world, and ſubmiſſive to the will of God. In this way it will be moſt applicable to, or at leaſt moſt ſenſible in thoſe who had once gone great lengths in profanity, and were, by the almighty and ſovereign grace of God, ſnatched as "brands from the burning." The oppoſition between their new and old characters is ordinarily ſo great that it will not admit of any doubt. To ſome others it may be neceſſary to make a more ſtrict and particular enquiry into the nature of ſincerity, and what is the full and proper evidence of the reality of the change.

That the reader may form as clear and diſtinct conceptions on this ſubject as poſſible, he may be pleaſed to recollect what was obſerved above, That perfect holineſs conſiſts in having the heart wholly poſſeſt by the love of God, without the mixture of any inferior or baſer paſſion; and that regeneration conſiſts in a ſupreme deſire to glorify God, and a preference of his favour to every

other enjoyment. Now what chiefly occaſions difficulty in diſcerning the reality of this change is, that there is much unſubdued ſin remaining in the children of God, and that there are many counterfeit graces, or appearances of religion, in thoſe who are, notwithſtanding, in the "gall of "bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity."

That there is a great degree of unmortified corruption ſtill remaining in the ſaints of God, and that not ſo much as one is wholly free from it, is apparent from too many melancholy proofs. It appears from the pathetic complaint of the apoſtle Paul, formerly referred to, of the law in his members warring againſt the law of God in his mind. It appears, alſo, from the groſs ſins into which ſome eminently holy perſons have been ſuffered occaſionally to fall, through the ſtrength of temptation, as David's adultery and murder, Solomon's idolatry, the apoſtle Peter's denial of his maſter, and ſeveral others recorded in ſcripture.

On the other hand, there are alſo counterfeit graces, common or imperfect operations of the Spirit which do not iſſue in a real converſion and ſaving change. This it will be proper to keep in mind, and perhaps, alſo, to attend a little to the proofs of it both from ſcripture and experience. That the word of God has ſome effect even upon thoſe who continue unrenewed, is plain

plain from many examples recorded in the ſacred volume. We read of a Felix trembling at the thoughts of a judgment to come: "And as he "reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and "judgment to come, Felix trembled, and an-"ſwered, Go thy way for this time, when I "have a convenient ſeaſon I will call for thee *." But we are not informed that he ever found that convenient ſeaſon, or deſired to hear any more of ſuch words.

In the parable of the ſower we have a character deſcribed of thoſe who not only "heard" the word, but "received" it with joy, and on whom it had an immediate and viſible, though only a temporary effect. "Some fell upon ſtony "places, where they had not much earth, and "forthwith they ſprung up, becauſe they had "no deepneſs of earth; and when the ſun was "up they were ſcorched; and, becauſe they had "not root, they withered away †.—He that re-"ceived the ſeed into ſtony places, the ſame is "he that heareth the word, and anon with joy "receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himſelf, "but dureth for a while: for when tribulation "or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, by "and by he is offended ‡." We read alſo of a Herod, who not only heard the word gladly, but

* Acts xxiv. 25. † Matt. xiii. 5 6. ‡ Ibid. ver. 20. 21.

" did many things."—" For Herod feared John,
" knowing that he was a juſt man, and an holy,
" and obſerved him, and when he heard him he
" did many things, and heard him gladly *."
Nay, we ſee even Ahab, the profane prince of Iſrael, humbling himſelf, and putting on ſackcloth, under the denunciation of divine wrath. Neither have we any reaſon, from the circumſtances of the ſtory, to believe that this was wholly hypocritical, but the contrary. " And
" it came to paſs when Ahab heard theſe words,
" that he rent his clothes, and put ſackcloth on
" his fleſh, and faſted, and lay in ſackcloth, and
" went ſoftly †." Theſe things, and all others of the ſame kind, even in wicked men, are repreſented as the effect of the operation of the Spirit in many paſſages of ſcripture. I ſhall only mention one, which is pretty remarkable, and well merits our attention. " For it is impoſſible
" for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have
" taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made
" partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted
" the good word of God, and the power of the
" world to come, if they ſhould fall away, to
" renew them again to repentance, ſeeing they
" crucify to themſelves the Son of God afreſh,
" and put him to an open ſhame ‡."

* Mark vi. 20. † 1 Kings xxi. 27. ‡ Heb. 6. 4.

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The ſame thing indeed appears plainly from the ſtate of the world, and in a particular manner from that variety of partial characters which I have formerly deſcribed. There are many things which have a religious appearance, and are taken by the deluded poſſeſſor for religion, when at bottom there is no real religion at all; and "mene tekel" ſhall be written upon them in the day of trial. There is a long gradation of characters between the openly profane ſinner, with a hardened heart, a ſacred conſcience, and a ſhameleſs countenance, on the one hand; and the refined, ſelf-deceiving hypocrite, with his duties and his forms, on the other: between thoſe who are furious, violent, and malignant enemies to religion in profeſſion and practice; and thoſe, who anſwer diſcreetly with the young man in the goſpel; and of whom it may be ſaid, as our Saviour ſays of him, that they "are not far from the kingdom of God." This ſhews at once the importance and difficulty of pointing out the great and diſtinguiſhing characters of real religion, and ſhewing how it eſſentially differs from all counterfeits.

But now, from the account given above of the nature of regeneration, and what hath been further added in illuſtration of it, we may ſee how this diſtinction is to be made, as far as it can be

be made by any, excepting the great Searcher of hearts. I apprehend, that the great and diſtinguiſhing mark of the truth and ſincerity of religion in general, and of every gracious diſpoſition in particular, ariſes from comparing it with its oppoſite. It is "the prevailing intereſt of God and the Redeemer in the heart, above the intereſt of inferior good; the habitual comparative preference we give to his ſervice and enjoyment, before every other object of deſire." This muſt be proved by its effects daily. And agreeably to this, our bleſſed Lord ſays, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his croſs, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me*." And again, in yet ſtronger terms, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and ſiſters; yea, and his own life alſo, he cannot be my diſciple †." Would you therefore know whether you are born again? Are you in doubt, when you find the ſpirit luſting againſt the fleſh and the fleſh againſt the ſpirit? Try, by diligent and univerſal examination, which of them is, upon the whole, the ſtrongeſt; which of

* Matt. x. 37, 38. † Luke xiv. 26.

them

them habitually yields to the other, when they come in competition. Into this all other marks and ſigns of religion reſolve themſelves at laſt; and from the evidence they give of the prevalence of the love of God in the heart, they derive all their worth and value. Every holy diſpoſition muſt be examined, not by its abſolute, but its comparative ſtrength; and the true knowledge of our ſtate ariſes from the concluſion and reſult of the whole.

There were, in the laſt age, many and great debates among men of piety and learning, whether ſpecial and common grace differ eſſentially in their nature, or if they differ only in degree. What I have juſt now ſaid may, perhaps, be thought by the intelligent reader, to imply my embracing the laſt of theſe opinions. My judgment of this queſtion is the ſame I have formed of many others, that it is unneceſſary, or even hurtful. It has perhaps, if examined to the bottom, no diſtinct meaning at all; but if it has any meaning, I am afraid it is a queſtion which it is impoſſible for us to reſolve. That it may be made plain to perſons of common underſtanding, the queſtion is, whether it is moſt proper to ſay, that a wicked man, or an unrenewed perſon, let his behaviour be ever ſo unexceptionable,

or

or his experiences ever ſo comfortable, can have no true love to God; no, not in the leaſt degree: or whether we ought not rather to ſay, his love to God is leſs than his love to the creature. I confeſs, I think it is beſt to ſay, in the words of the Holy Ghoſt, that "he loveth the creature more than "the Creator"——that "he loveth the praiſe "of man more than the praiſe of God;" and for this reaſon, he hath no "true" love, either to God or man.

In the preceding part of this treatiſe, I have affirmed, with ſufficient clearneſs, that there muſt be an eſſential change in order to ſalvation; and that, till this be wrought, the perſon is in ſin, and can do nothing but ſin. The reaſon of this is very plain; that the ſupreme and governing motive of all his actions is wrong, and therefore every one of them muſt be ſo, upon the whole. I ſuppoſe, if they were to explain themſelves fully, this is chiefly meant by thoſe who inſiſt that there is an eſſential difference between ſpecial and common grace. And in this view, no doubt, it is not only certainly true, but a truth of very great importance. It appears, however, on the other hand, equally certain and undeniable, that when we obſerve good diſpoſitions and good actions in one character, and ſee the ſame appearances in another, we have no way by which we can diſcover the difference,

but by their perſeverance, and their comparative effects. Neither, indeed, has the perſon himſelf any other rule by which they can be judged. For which reaſon, I would be very willing to affirm both ſides of the above queſtion; to ſay that an unregenerate perſon has no true love to God or his neighbour, and at the ſame time, that this is only becauſe no love but that which is ſupreme and prevalent is true, or will be accepted as ſincere.

Unleſs we take up the matter in this light, we are in danger of doing great hurt on both hands. On the one hand, it is ready to alarm the pious, humble, and timorous ſoul, if we ſay, that ſpecial grace differs eſſentially from common grace, and that there muſt be ſomething quite different in its kind, as to every gracious diſpoſition, than what ever reſided in hypocrites. Alas! will the fearful perſon ſay, I have ſeen ſome who have gone great lengths, who have been well eſteemed, and well received among all ſerious people; and yet have made ſhipwreck of the faith, diſhonoured their profeſſion, and opened the mouths of adverſaries to blaſpheme. They had all the appearance of as much love to God, as much delight in his ſervice, as much zeal for his glory, as much ſtrictneſs, and as much uſefulneſs of converſation; nay, more than I

can

can pretend to. What then am I to think of this? Muſt all my gracious diſpoſitions be eſſentially different from theirs? And how is this difference to be made appear? To all ſuch I would ſay, thoſe unhappy perſons, by their conduct, and that alone, plainly diſcover, that they have either been wholly impoſtors and deceivers of the world, or that they have loved ſome object of carnal affection; ſome luſt, of one kind or another, more than they loved God. The ſtrength of their affections in one way, has been over-balanced by the dominion of corruption in another. And that corruption which has been long diſguiſed or reſtrained, at laſt breaks out with ſo much the greater violence, and the greater noiſe.

Again, on the other hand, by affirming that there is a difference in kind between ſpecial and common grace; and that a hypocrite or unrenewed perſon cannot have the leaſt meaſure of the ſame ſort of love to God or man with a child of God, we are apt to make ſome ſlaves to ſin upon examining themſelves judge amiſs in their own favour. They cannot help thinking that they have a real unfeigned affection for that which is good in many reſpects; as indeed they have, when it doth not ſtand in competition with their reigning or darling luſt. To give an example

ample of this; it is frequently made a mark of true religion, to love the people of God; and indeed, it is one of the beſt, and when taken in the ſenſe I have mentioned above, as a ſupreme and prevalent love, it is an infallible ſign. It hath no leſs warrant than the word of God: "We know that we have paſſed from death unto "life, becauſe we love the brethren: he that "loveth not his brother, abideth in death *." But I dare ſay, there are many who live in ſin, and are ſtrangers to the power of godlineſs, who, upon the moſt impartial examination of themſelves, would conclude, that they did love the people of God.

Perhaps ſome will ſay, they may love good men, but they love them for other qualities, and cannot love them becauſe of their piety. Experience tells us the contrary. They may eſteem them, love them, ſpeak well of them, and do them ſervice becauſe of their piety. Nay, I have known (though that is more rare) ſome very looſe livers, who ſeemed to have nothing good about them, but an eſteem of pious perſons, and a deſire to eſpouſe their cauſe, which they continued to do in all ordinary caſes. But ſhould theſe ſervants of God preſume to reprove them ſharply, or hinder them in the enjoyment of their darling luſt, their love would ſoon turn to

* 1 John iii. 14.

hatred.

hatred. Who would not have ſaid that Herod ſincerely loved John Baptiſt, when the very reaſon aſſigned for his reſpect and attendance is, that "he was a juſt man and an holy." Yet the ſame Herod, when he was reproved by John for his ſcandalous adultery and inceſt, ſhut him up in priſon. And afterwards, ſo little was his conſtancy, that when the daughter of Herodias had gained upon his affection by her dancing, and involved him in a raſh promiſe, he gratified her mother's ſavage cruelty with the Baptiſt's head. The deſcription of his ſituation of mind is remarkable, but far from being ſingular; we are told, "the king was exceeding ſorry; yet "for his oath's ſake, and for their ſakes that "ſat with him, he would not reject her *." Here was love in one ſenſe, or in a certain degree; but he loved the damſel and her mother, and the good opinion of his courtly companions, ſtill more than the faithful preacher.

We have innumerable examples of the ſame thing every day before our eyes. Voluptuous men love the people of God, but will not obey their ſalutary counſel, becauſe they love their luſts more. Covetous men will love the people of God, and praiſe them, and defend them, but will not open their purſes to provide for them, becauſe they love their ſilver and

* Mark xvi. 26.

gold

gold more. What I have ſaid of this diſpoſition, might be eaſily ſhewn to hold with regard to every other. In ſhort, whatever unſeen or inward difference there may be; whatever diverſity of operation of the holy and ſovereign Spirit, the great trial to us is the ſame which Chriſt made of Peter: "Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt "thou me more than theſe?" It is good that we ſhould often repeat the queſtion as he did, and bleſſed is that man who is able in ſincerity to ſay with Peter, "Lord, thou knoweſt all "things, thou knoweſt that I love thee *."

I am ſenſible, there will be many ready to challenge this, or at leaſt to be inwardly diſſatisfied with it, as too general and undetermined. They will be ready to think, that this leaves the matter ſtill at a great uncertainty; and that it muſt be very difficult to decide in many caſes, whether the love of God or of the world hath the greateſt habitual influence in the heart. The truth is, I am far from denying or diſſembling that it is a matter of great difficulty in many inſtances; nay, as I have hinted in ſome of the former pages of this diſcourſe, there are caſes in which it is altogether impoſſible to come to any certain determination. In ſome, grace and corruption are ſo equally matched, at it were;

* John xxi. 17.

have

have ſuch violent ſtruggles, and take their turns ſo often, in reſtraining and governing one another, that it will be hard to tell, till the laſt day, which of them was ſtrongeſt upon the whole. But this is no juſt objection to what I have delivered above. It was never intended that ſuch unequal and variable Chriſtians ſhould enjoy much peace; and if they do, it is ſurely upon ſome idle or imaginary ground. To many it may be juſtly ſaid as Jacob ſaid to his ſon Reuben, "Unſtable as water, thou ſhalt not excel *." Inſtead of deviſing ways, and making ſuppoſitions, to encourage ſuch perſons to think well of their own ſtate, it is a far ſafer, and much kinder office, to excite them to a holy jealouſy over themſelves. This indeed ſeems to be the language of ſcripture with regard to us all: "Let "us therefore fear, leſt a promiſe being left us "of entering into his reſt, any of you ſhould "ſeem to come ſhort of it †." Elſewhere, ſays the ſame apoſtle, "And we deſire that "every one of you do ſhew the ſame diligence, "to the full aſſurance of hope unto the end ‡."

The life of a Chriſtian is conſtantly repreſented in ſcripture as a life of vigilance and caution, of activity and diligence. "Be ſober and vigilant, "for your adverſary the devil, as a roaring lion, "walketh about ſeeking whom he may de-

* Gen. xlix. 4. † Heb. iv. 1. ‡ Heb. vi. 11.

vour,"

"vour*." The ſame apoſtle ſays, "And be-
"ſides this, giving all diligence, add to your
"faith, virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to
"knowledge temperance, and to temperance
"patience, and to patience godlineſs, and to
"godlineſs brotherly kindneſs, and to brotherly
"kindneſs charity; for if theſe things be in you
"and abound, they make you that ye ſhall nei-
"ther be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge
"of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.—Wherefore the ra-
"ther, brethren, give diligence to make your
"calling and election ſure †." I beg it may be obſerved, that this is no way contrary to that confidence in the divine mercy and good hope through grace, which the goſpel imparts to the believer. Theſe are intended to animate him to diligence in duty, in dependence on divine ſtrength, and are themſelves gradually confirmed and improved, by producing their proper effects. Few ſeem to have enjoyed more of the conſolations of the goſpel than the apoſtle Paul; and yet he repreſents even the fear of final diſappointment, as what daily influenced his own conduct. "But I keep under my body, and bring
"it into ſubjection, leſt that by any means,
"when I have preached to others, I myſelf
"ſhould be a caſt-away ‡."

* 1 Pet. v. 8. † 2 Pet. i. 5—10. ‡ 1 Cor. ix, 27.

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I cannot help taking notice here, that there is often juſt cauſe to find fault even with perſons who, to all appearance, are ſincerely pious upon this ſubject. For all ſuch I deſire to have the higheſt eſteem, and to treat them with the greateſt tenderneſs and affection. In the mean time, they ought to be willing and even deſirous of having their miſtakes pointed out to them. Now I am perſuaded, there are many who ſeek after aſſurance of their own intereſt in God's favour in a wrong way, and that they often expect it in a degree that is not ſuited to the preſent ſtate.

1. They often ſeek it in a wrong way; they are ready to lay hold of impreſſions upon their minds; and, in a variety of particulars, are in danger of repeating the ſin of the Phariſees, who aſked a ſign from heaven. When a miniſter is ſpeaking or writing on this ſubject, they expect ſomething particular and perſonal; and, if I may ſpeak ſo, that he ſhould be in God's ſtead, and give them aſſurance, in place of telling them how they ought to ſeek it. But this eagerneſs, from however good a diſpoſition it may ſpring, is unwarranted and prepoſterous. We muſt be ſatisfied to walk in the way that God hath pointed out to us; to give thanks to him for the ſure foundation of a ſinner's hope which is laid

laid in Zion, and to conclude the ſafety of our own ſtate from a ſerious and deliberate examination of ourſelves by the rules laid down in the holy ſcriptures. In this way only is the moſt ſolid, ſettled, and laſting peace to be obtained.

Perhaps ſome will be ready to ſay, Do you then condemn in general all regard to impreſſions that may be ſenſibly felt upon the mind, or all ſecret and powerful ſuggeſtions of paſſages of ſcripture? Does the Holy Ghoſt, the comforter, never in this manner enlighten or refreſh theſe ſouls in whom he dwells, according to his promiſe? "I will dwell in them, and "walk in them; and I will be their God, and "they ſhall be my people *." No, far from it; I have no deſign of denying the real operation or gracious preſence of the Spirit of God, which is certainly one of the moſt eſſential, and one of the moſt comfortable doctrines of the "glorious goſpel;" but, at the ſame time, from the love I bear to it, I would guard it againſt miſtakes and abuſe. When any truth, or any paſſage of ſcripture, is ſuggeſted to the mind, which particularly and ſtrongly points out the duty proper to our preſent ſtate and circumſtances; when this is backed with a powerful ſenſe of its obligation, and by that means a deceitful or ſlothful

* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

heart is revived and quickened; this is thankfully to be acknowledged, and readily complied with. When a doubtful, dejected, or deſponding mind is relieved, by a ſtrong and affecting view of ſome encouraging promiſe or gracious invitation to the weary ſinner, or the contrite ſpirit; when, in ſuch a caſe, the mind is led to a diſcovery of the rich mercy and free grace of God to the guilty and miſerable, it ought to be embraced and improved; and, in many ſuch inſtances, ſerious perſons, harraſſed by temptation, have had cauſe to ſay with David, "I will bleſs the Lord, "who hath given me counſel; my reins alſo inſtruct me in the night ſeaſon *."

This is no more than the neceſſary conſequence of the conſtant over-ruling providence of God, which, as it extends to the diſpoſal and direction of the moſt minute circumſtances in the courſe of nature, cannot fail to be particularly exerciſed about the holineſs and peace of his own children. They obey what appears to be their duty, or an argument againſt ſin; they truſt the divine faithfulneſs in what concerns their comfort; and adore the divine wiſdom and goodneſs in the propriety and ſeaſonableneſs of either or both. But for any perſon, from the ſudden ſuggeſtion of a paſſage of ſcripture, ("I am thy "God" for example; or, "I have called thee

* Pſal. xvi. 7.

"by

"by thy name, thou art mine") without any examination of his temper and diſpoſition, to conclude the ſafety of his ſtate, is ſurely a piece of preſumption without ground.

Neither is it leſs fooliſh than preſumptuous; for all ſuch muſt be liable to be caſt down by other and contrary ſuggeſtions. We know very well, and have an inſtance of it in our Saviour's temptation, that Satan can ſuggeſt paſſages of ſcripture; nay, and ſpeak piouſly and plauſibly upon them: but their concluſions muſt be tried by other ſcriptures. To all who are inclined to the above deluding practice, I would ſay with the apoſtle John, "Beloved, believe not every ſpirit, "but try the ſpirits, whether they are of God *." Or with the prophet Iſaiah, "To the law and "to the teſtimony, if they ſpeak not according "to this word, it is becauſe there is no light "in them †." There is alſo a very proper advice, mixed with caution, given by the ſame prophet, in the following words; "Who is among "you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the "voice of his ſervant, that walketh in darkneſs, and hath no light; let him truſt in "the name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his "God. Behold all ye that kindle a fire, all "that compaſs yourſelves about with ſparks, "walk in the light of your fires, and in the ſparks

* 1 John iv. 1. † Iſ. viii. 20.

" that ye have kindled; this ſhall ye have of " mine hand, ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow *."

2. I muſt alſo obſerve, that many ſerious perſons ſeem to deſire, and even to expect, aſſurance in ſuch a meaſure and degree, as is not ſuited to our preſent ſtate. They would have faith and hope to be the ſame with ſenſe. They would have heaven and earth to be the ſame, and would put on their crown before they have finiſhed their courſe. I am perſuaded, many deprive themſelves of that comfort to which they have an undoubted title, and which they might eaſily poſſeſs, by aiming at that which is beyond their reach. They do not remember, that it is true in this reſpect as well as in many others, what the apoſtle ſays, " Now " we ſee through a glaſs darkly, but then face " to face; now I know in part, but then ſhall " I know even as alſo I am known †." Would you but reflect upon yourſelves, Chriſtians, you would be aſhamed of your complaints. You would be aſhamed that you ſhould ſo much as lay claim to ſo high a degree of comfort, when you are ſo careleſs in your duty. Your improvement in the ſpiritual life is but very gradual, and therefore it is no wonder your hope ſhould be but in proportion to it.

* Iſ. l. x. 11. † 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

It

It is of the greateſt conſequence in religion, to diſtinguiſh carefully between that hope and comfort which ariſes directly from the promiſes of God in ſcripture, and that which ariſes from a reflex obſervation of the change that has taken place in our own temper and practice. To entertain and encourage doubts in the former caſe, is directly contrary both to our duty and intereſt; but in the other, perhaps ſuſpicion and diffidence is moſt becoming the Chriſtian temper, and moſt conducive to the advancement of the Chriſtian life. Is there any perſon peruſing this treatiſe, who is incommoded and diſtreſſed with anxiety and fear? Take heed that you be not doubting as much of the certainty of God's word, as you are jealous of your own ſtate. Is it not more than ſufficient that you have ſo many gracious invitations, ſo many full, free, and unlimited offers of mercy, through a Redeemer, to the chief of ſinners? Does it not give repoſe to the mind, and reſt to the conſcience, when, by direct acts of faith, you receive and rely on Chriſt alone for ſalvation; ſeeing him to be ſingle in this undertaking, and all-ſufficient for its accompliſhment, and therefore cleaving to him as your Lord and your God, and your all. I would not chuſe to affirm, that aſſurance, in the ordinary ſenſe of that word, is eſſential to faith, or that its proper deſcription is, to believe

that my ſins are forgiven me; yet ſurely, ſome meaſure of hope is inſeparable from it. Faith and deſpair are oppoſite and inconſiſtent. If you do really believe the ſincerity of the offer; if you do really believe the fulneſs and ability of the Saviour, "the God of hope will fill you with "all joy and peace in believing, through the "power of the Holy Ghoſt."

To this let me add, that conſidering the matter, even with regard to a renewing and ſanctifying work of the Spirit upon your hearts, your complaints are often exceſſive and unreaſonable. You would have evidence, not that the work is begun, but that it is finiſhed. You deſire comfort, not ſuch as is ſufficient to ſtrengthen you againſt temptation, and bear you up under ſuffering; but ſuch as would make temptation to be no temptation, and ſuffering to be no ſuffering. But if you are ſenſible that you ſtill adhere to God as your portion, that you cannot find peace or reſt in any thing elſe; and that a whole world would not induce you to give up even your doubtful title to his favour and love, ſurely you ought to endeavour after compoſure of mind: you may be frequently in the ſtate of the apoſtle Paul, who ſays of himſelf, "Our fleſh had no reſt, but we were troubled "on every ſide, without were fightings, within

"were

"were fears*." And yet ſay with the ſame apoſtle, "We are troubled on every ſide, yet "not diſtreſſed; we are perplexed, but not in "deſpair; perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt "down, but not deſtroyed†." It is not meant by this to condemn an earneſt deſire to abound in hope, or a frequent and ſtrict examination of our ſtate and temper, but to warn Chriſtians againſt impatience, and againſt an unthankful, fretful diſpoſition, which indeed diſappoints itſelf, and prevents the attainment of that peace, for the want of which it complains.

This leads naturally to the mention of another fault incident to ſerious perſons, which will lay a foundation for a very important leſſon upon this ſubject. The fault here intended is, falling into a ſlothful, deſpondent neglect of duty. The devices of Satan, our great enemy, are very various, and unſpeakably artful. When he cannot keep men in ſecurity, and drive them blindly along the broad path which leadeth to deſtruction, he endeavours to make their duty as painful and burdenſome to them as poſſible. When ſome perſons give themſelves to ſerious ſelf-examination, he embarraſſes them with ſcruples, he involves them in doubts, he diſtreſſes them with fears. This often brings on a re-

† 2 Cor. vii. 5. * 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

laxation or ſuſpenſion of their diligence in duty; they give themſelves up to anxious, complaining thoughts; they ſtand ſtill, and will go no farther in religion, till they are ſatisfied whether they have as yet gone any length at all. But whatever good ground any perſon may have to be diſſatisfied with himſelf, ſo ſoon as he perceives that this is its effect, he ought to reſiſt it as a temptation. I cannot better illuſtrate this, than by a ſimilitude borrowed from the ſcripture language on the ſame ſubject. Whether do you think that child moſt dutiful, under a ſenſe of his father's diſpleaſure, who patiently and ſilently applies himſelf to his work, or he who ſaunters about in idleneſs, and with peeviſh and ſullen complaints, is conſtantly calling in queſtion his father's love?

This lays the foundation for a very neceſſary and uſeful direction, which indeed flows naturally from all that has been ſaid on the evidence of regeneration. Endeavour, Chriſtians, to preſerve and increaſe your hope in God, by further degrees of ſanctification, by zeal and diligence in doing his will. The more the image of God in you is perfected, it will be the more eaſily diſcerned. If you are at any time ready to doubt whether ſuch or ſuch corruptions are conſiſtent with real religion; if you find this a hard queſtion to reſolve, go another way to work,

work, and ſtrive by vigilance and prayer to mortify theſe corruptions, and then the difficulty is removed. If in a time of affliction and diſtreſs, you find it hard to determine whether it ought to be conſidered as the correction of a father, or the ſeverity of a judge, endeavour thro' divine grace to bear it with the patience of a child, and you will ſoon ſee its merciful original by its ſalutary effect. What ſhould be the daily ſtudy of a Chriſtian, but to mortify ſin in heart and converſation? and his comfort ſhould ariſe from his apparent ſucceſs in this important ſtrife. When grain of different kinds is but ſpringing from the ground, it is not eaſy to diſtinguiſh between one and another, but their growth aſcertains their quality, which is ſtill more fully diſcerned as they approach nearer to maturity. Imitate in this the great apoſtle of the Gentiles, "Not as though I had already "attained, either were already perfect; but I "follow after, if that I may apprehend that "for which alſo I am apprehended of Chriſt "Jeſus. Brethren, I count not myſelf to have "apprehended, but this one thing I do, for-"getting thoſe things which are behind, and "reaching forth unto thoſe things which are "before, I preſs toward the mark for the prize "of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus *."

* Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.

Before cloſing this ſection, I muſt obſerve, that though the account I have given of the great mark of real religion, may ſtill leave ſome in the dark, yet ſurely it carries in it the cleareſt and plaineſt condemnation of many hearers of the goſpel. Oh, that it were poſſible to faſten a conviction of it upon their minds! Are there not many who appear from ſabbath to ſabbath in the houſe of God, who dare not affirm ſeriouſly to their own hearts, that God and his ſervice has more of their habitual ſettled affection than the world, or any of its enjoyments? I do not here underſtand groſs ſinners, whoſe crimes are "open going before unto judgment;" but I mean the more ſober and regular profeſſors of religion, who may have "a form of godli-"neſs, and deny the power thereof." I am perſuaded this is a more proper trial of their ſtate, than any particular rule of duty. Many ſuch perſons know ſo little of the extent and ſpirituality of the law of God, that it is not impoſſible they may be ready to affirm they do not allow themſelves in any known ſin, as the young man in the goſpel ſeems to have anſwered ſincerely, when he ſaid to our Saviour, "Maſter, all theſe "have I obſerved from my youth*." But I

* Mark x. 20.

would

would farther aſk them, Whether hath God or the world moſt of your love, moſt of your thoughts, and moſt of your care? Can ſuch of you pretend this, whoſe eager, ardent, nightly thought, and daily pleaſure, is only to increaſe your ſubſtance? who would not go to market without re-examining your tranſactions, and computing your gain; but can daily go to the houſe of God, without obſerving, enquiring after, or deſiring to ſee its proper fruits? Can ſuch of you pretend this, to whom all ſerious converſation is tedious and diſguſtful, and the ſociety of good men a painful reſtraint? to whom the ſabbath is a dull, melancholy, and burdenſome ſeaſon? Oh, my brethren, let me beſeech you to be faithful to your own ſouls. Your precious time is daily haſtening on; the day of your merciful viſitation is wearing faſt away. Hear while there is yet peace, and intreat that God, for Chriſt's ſake, would freely pardon all your ſins; would renew you in the ſpirit of your minds; would fit you for his ſervice on earth, and for his preſence and enjoyment in heaven.

Thus I have explained at conſiderable length, and with all the care and accuracy in my power, the great and general evidence of regeneration, viz. the ſuperiority of the intereſt of God and

the Redeemer in the heart, above the intereſt of inferior good. This, I hope, will be of uſe in itſelf, to diſtinguiſh the precious from the vile, to preſerve you from ſin, and excite you to diligence in every part of your duty, that it may be more and more manifeſt. At the ſame time, it will be of the greateſt ſervice, in the uſe and application of other ſigns of real religion, by ſhewing when they are concluſive, and when they are not.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the ſteps by which this change is accompliſhed.

WE proceed now to conſider by what ſteps, and by what means, this change is brought about. I am deeply ſenſible how difficult a part of the ſubject this is, and how hard it will be to treat of it in a diſtinct and preciſe, and at the ſame time, in a cautious and guarded manner. It is often complained of in thoſe who write on this ſubject, that they confine and limit the HOLY ONE, and that they give unneceſſary alarms to thoſe who have not had experience of every particular which they think proper to mention. There is no doubt but God acts in an * abſolute and ſovereign manner in the diſpenſation of his

* It will be proper to inform the reader, that the word "abſolute" uſed here, and in ſome other places of this diſcourſe, is by no means to be underſtood as ſignifying the ſame thing with "arbitrary." He who acts arbitrarily, acts without any reaſon at all. To ſay this of the divine procedure, would be little leſs than blaſphemy. When we ſay that God acts "in an "abſolute and ſovereign manner," the meaning is, that he acts upon the beſt and ſtrongeſt reaſons, and for the nobleſt and moſt excellent ends; but which are many or moſt of them beyond our reach and comprehenſion; and particularly, that there is not the leaſt foundation for ſuppoſing that the reaſons of preference are taken from comparative human merit.

grace,

grace, as in every other part of his will. As he cannot be limited as to perſons, ſo neither as to the time and manner of their reformation. To this purpoſe, and in this preciſe meaning, our Saviour ſays, "The wind bloweth where it "liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, "but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whi-"ther it goeth: ſo is every one that is born of "the Spirit *."

Sometimes it pleaſeth God to ſnatch ſinners from the very brink of the pit, to raiſe up ſome of the moſt abandoned profligates, as trophies of his victorious grace and mercy; while he ſuffers others, far more moderate and decent, who are "not far from the kingdom of God," finally to fall ſhort of it. He ſometimes glorifies his power and mercy at once, by converting his moſt inveterate enemies, and making them the moſt zealous, active, and ſucceſsful advocates for his cauſe. Such an inſtance was the apoſtle Paul, who from a perſecutor became a preacher. Sometimes converſion is ſpeedily and ſuddenly brought about, and the times and circumſtances of the change may be eaſily aſcertained. This was the caſe with the jailor recorded in the hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles. The ſame may be ſaid of the apoſtle Paul; and there have been particular examples of it in every age. Some-

* John iii, 8.

times,

times, on the other hand, the reception of the truth, and renovation of the heart, goes on by ſlow and inſenſible degrees; nor is it eaſy to ſay by what means the change was begun, or at what time it was compleated. This was perhaps the caſe with moſt, if not all, the diſciples of our Lord, during his perſonal miniſtry.

Sometimes the change is very ſignal and ſenſible, the growth and improvement of the ſpiritual life ſpeedy and remarkable, the greateſt ſinners becoming the moſt eminent ſaints; like the woman mentioned in the goſpel, to whom many ſins were forgiven, and who loved her Redeemer much. Sometimes, on the other hand, the change is very doubtful, and the progreſs of the believer hardly diſcernible. Some of this ſort are reproved by the apoſtle Paul in the following words, which are but too applicable to many profeſſing Chriſtians of the preſent age: "For "when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye "have need that one teach you again, which "be the firſt principles of the oracles of God, "and are become ſuch as have need of milk, "and not of ſtrong meat*."—Sometimes the convert hath much peace and ſenſible comfort, rejoicing with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory; and ſometimes, on the other hand, he is diſtreſſ-

* Heb. v. 12.

ed

ed with doubts and fears, and made to walk in darkneſs. Once more, ſome ſinners are brought in by deep and long humiliation, and are almoſt diſtracted with legal terrors, while others are powerfully, though ſweetly, conſtrained by the cords of divine love. All theſe "worketh the "ſelf ſame ſpirit, who divideth to every man ſe-"verally as he will." I deſire, that what has now been ſaid, may be ſtill kept in mind; ſo that if the evidences of a ſaving change can be produced, there need be little ſolicitude about the time or manner of its being wrought.

What I propoſe to offer on this part of the ſubject, is not to be conſidered as in the leaſt degree contrary to, or inconſiſtent with, theſe truths. Nay, I am not to lay down a plan and ſay, this is the ordinary way in which ſinners are brought to the ſaving knowledge of God, leaving it to him, in ſome few, uncommon, and extraordinary caſes, to take ſovereign ſteps, and admit exceptions from the ordinary rules. This is a way of ſpeaking common enough; but tho' it may be very well meant, I apprehend it hath not in it much, either of truth or utility. The ſalvation of every child of Adam is of free, abſolute, ſovereign grace: and the actual change may be wrought at any time, in any manner, by any means, and will produce its effects in any meaſure, that to infinite wiſdom ſhall ſeem proper.

per. Neither ought we to pretend to account for the diverſity in any other manner than our Saviour does: "Even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeem-"ed good in thy ſight *." Therefore what I have in view, is to ſpeak of ſuch ſteps in the change as are, in ſubſtance at leaſt, common to all true converts. It will be a ſort of analyſis, or more full explication of the change itſelf, and ſerve, among other uſes, further to diſtinguiſh the real from the counterfeit. Too much can hardly be ſaid on this ſubject: "For "what is the chaff to the wheat? ſaith the "Lord." It will alſo illuſtrate the divine wiſdom, as well as ſovereignty, by ſhowing how that diverſity of operation, ſo remarkable in different ſubjects, produces in all at laſt the ſame bleſſed effect.

SECT. I.

There muſt be a diſcovery of the real nature of God.

IN the firſt place, one important and neceſſary ſtep in bringing about a ſaving change, is that the ſinner get a di covery of the real nature, the infinite majeſty, and tranſcendent glory of the living God! Perhaps ſome will be ſurpriſed, that, as uſual, a conviction of ſin is not mentioned firſt, as the preliminary ſtep. I enter in-

* Luke x. 21.

to

to no quarrel or debate with thoſe who do ſo; but I have firſt mentioned the other, which is but ſeldom taken notice of, from a firm perſuaſion, that a diſcovery of the nature and glory of the true God lies at the foundation of all. This alſo can produce ſalutary convictions of ſin; for how can we know what ſin is, till we know him againſt whom we have ſinned. The ſame thing only will point out the difference between real conviction, and ſuch occaſional fears as never go farther than a ſpirit of bondage.

In ſupport of this, you may obſerve, that in ſcripture, thoſe who are in a natural or unconverted ſtate, are often deſcribed as lying in a ſtate of ignorance or darkneſs. They are ſaid to be ſuch as know not God: "Howbeit then when "ye knew not God, ye did ſervice unto them "which by nature are no gods *." See alſo the following deſcription: "Having the under-"ſtanding darkened, being alienated from the "life of God, through the ignorance that is in "them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts †." Agreeably to this, the change produced in them is preſented as giving them light or underſtanding, in oppoſition to their former ignorance; "to open their eyes, and to turn them from "darkneſs to light, and from the power of Sa-"tan unto God ‡. But if our goſpel be hid, it

* Gal. iv. 8. † Eph. iv. 18. ‡ Acts xxvi. 18.

"is

" is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the god " of this world hath blinded the minds of them " which believe not, leſt the light of the glo- " rious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of " God, ſhould ſhine unto them.—For God, who " commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, " hath ſhined in our hearts, to give the light of " the knowledge of the glory of God in the face " of Jeſus Chriſt *." In this way is the matter repreſented in ſcripture, much more frequently than is commonly obſerved; and, as the underſtanding is the leading faculty in our nature, it is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the change ſhould begin there, by a diſcovery of the nature and glory of God, as the foundation of all that is afterwards to follow.

This will be further evident, if we reflect upon the account formerly given, and ſufficiently ſupported from the holy ſcriptures, of the nature of this change, That it conſiſts in a ſupreme regard to the glory of God, and an habitual prevailing deſire of his favour. To this it is abſolutely neceſſary, as a preliminary, that there be a diſcovery of the real nature and tranſcendent glory of God. How can any man have that as the chief and leading motive of action, which he doth not underſtand? How can any man have that as the ſupreme object of deſire, which he

* 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.

doth

doth not know? Neither of theſe is poſſible; there muſt, therefore, be ſome ſuch diſcovery as I have mentioned above. It is true, this is but imperfect at firſt; there will be in the truly regenerate a growing diſcovery of the glory of God, as well as a growing delight in him, as its conſequence: yet there muſt be ſome view of his nature, as the beginning of the change, and the ground-work of every holy diſpoſition.

This diſcovery of God implies two things, which, as they are both neceſſary, ſo they deſerve our particular attention; and it is not improper to diſtinguiſh carefully the one from the other. 1. It muſt be a diſcovery of his real nature. 2. A diſcovery of the worth and excellence of his nature, which is, properly ſpeaking the glory of God.

1. It muſt be a diſcovery of the real nature of God. He muſt be ſeen to be juſt ſuch a Being as he really is, and no falſe or adulterated image muſt be placed in his room, or adored in his ſtead. He muſt be ſeen in his ſpiritual nature, as almighty in his power, unſearchable in his wiſdom, inviolable in his truth; but, above all, he muſt be ſeen as infinite in his holineſs and hatred of ſin, as impartial in his juſtice, and determined to puniſh it. Such is the ſcripture repreſentation of God, as "glorious in his holineſs.—Evil can-
"not dwell with him, and ſinners cannot ſtand
"in

"in his preſence." It is the error of the wicked to ſuppoſe the contrary; and, indeed, it is the very ſource of wickedneſs to deny the being, or to deny the holineſs of God; and theſe amount much to the ſame thing. "Wherefore doth the "wicked contemn God; he hath ſaid in his heart "thou wilt not require it*.—The fool hath "ſaid in his heart, There is no God †.—Theſe "things thou haſt done, and I kept ſilence; "thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch an "one as thyſelf, but I will reprove thee, and "ſet them in order before thine eyes ‡."

God muſt be ſeen as he is repreſented in his own word, which is the only rule of faith, the pillar and ground of truth. This is a matter of the greateſt importance, which, I am ſorry to ſay, is in this age very ſeldom attended to, but which is moſt manifeſtly and undeniably juſt. If God is not ſeen in his real nature, as he is in truth, he can never be acceptably ſerved. If a wrong or falſe character of God is formed, no worſhip we can offer to him, no love or reſpect we can bear to him is genuine; or rather, to ſpeak more properly, our ſervice and attachment is, in that caſe, wholly miſplaced, and not directed to him at all, but ſomething elſe is loved, honoured, and ſerved in his room. I beſeech the ſerious reader to obſerve, what an unſpeakable

* Pſal. x. 13. † Pſal. xiv. 1. ‡ Pſal. l. 21.

jealouſy

jealouſy God diſcovered under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, as to the purity of his worſhip, and what a heinous crime all idolatry was eſteemed. How great was the divine diſpleaſure at the making and worſhipping the golden calf, although it is very probable Aaron only intended to repreſent the true God, by the ſame ſymbol they had ſeen in Egypt? Did not this belong to the ſubſtance and not only to the circumſtances of religion? Is it not then equally intereſting under the New Teſtament as under the Old? Was the unchangeable God ſo much diſpleaſed at giving him a falſe name, and will he not be equally diſpleaſed with thoſe who attribute to him a falſe nature?

As this truth ſerves to explain the nature and riſe of regeneration, ſo it alſo receives particular light and evidence itſelf from what has been ſaid in the preceding parts of this ſubject. Regeneration conſiſts in having the image of God again drawn upon the heart; that is, its being carried out to the ſupreme love of God, and delight in him: or, in other words, brought to the ſupreme love of, and delight in perfect goodneſs and immaculate holineſs. When this is the caſe, the ſinner is renewed, he again bears the image of God, which he had loſt, he is again fitted for the preſence of God, from which he had been expelled. But if he has wrong notions of God, if he

he takes him to be eſſentially different from what he really is, he ſerves not the true God at all, he bears not his image, he delights not in his fellowſhip, he is unfit for his preſence. If religion conſiſts in a divine nature, ſuch a perſon does not poſſeſs it, unleſs there are more Gods than one. There may, indeed, be an alteration in him, he may have transferred his allegiance, and changed his maſter, for idols are many, but he is not brought unto God; and, ſo long as God is immutable, his happineſs is impoſſible.

I can recollect nothing that is worth notice as an objection againſt this, but that our knowledge of God, at any rate, is extremely imperfect and defective. It is ſo to be ſure, while we are in this world; nay, probably, it will be ſo to all eternity: for "who can by ſearching find out God? "Who can find out the Almighty unto perfec- "tion? It is high as heaven, what can we do? "Deeper than hell, what can we know? The "meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and "broader than the ſea *." But there is a great difference between the imperfection of our knowledge of God, and forming conceptions of him that are fundamentally wrong. There is a great difference between having weak and inadequate ideas of the truth, and believing or acting upon the oppoſite falſhood. Unleſs this is admitted,

* Job xi. 7, 8, 9.

we

we ſhall never ſee the unſpeakable advantage which the Jews enjoyed over the Gentiles, "be-"cauſe to them were committed the oracles of "God;" nor indeed ſhall we ſee the worth and beauty of the ancient diſpenſation in general. It was one uniform diſplay of this great and important truth, which is delivered with ſo much majeſty by God himſelf: "I am the Lord, that is "my name, and my glory will I not give to ano-"ther, neither my praiſe to graven images." Neither is this at all relaxed under the New Teſtament. The importance of "holding the truth "as it is in Jeſus"—of "holding faſt the form "of ſound words"—and "keeping the truth," is often declared, as well as that "no lie is of the "truth." And no wonder that in this pure and ſpiritual conſtitution, it ſhould be neceſſary to have clear and diſtinct views of him who is "the "Father of ſpirits."

Thus I hope it appears, that, in order to a ſaving change, there muſt be a diſcovery of the real nature of the one only, the living and true God. Before we proceed further, let me obſerve that hence may be ſeen, in the cleareſt light, the danger both of ignorance, and error.

1. Of ignorance. It is plain that thoſe who are groſsly ignorant muſt be unrenewed. Thoſe who do not know God, cannot poſſibly love him. Do you not now ſee the meaning and weight of the

the ſtrong language of ſcripture, where we are told the heathen nations were ſitting "in dark-"neſs, and in the region and ſhadow of death?" What force ſhould this give to the prayers ſo often offered up, both in public and in private, that the "name" of God may be "hallowed," and his kingdom come? How much ſhould it add to the zeal and diligence, eſpecially of thoſe who are appointed to watch for the ſouls of others? What concern ſhould it give them, leſt any under their immediate inſpection "ſhould periſh for "lack of knowledge." It is indeed ſurpriſing to think, what groſs ignorance prevails at preſent among many, notwithſtanding the excellent opportunities of inſtruction which they have in their offer. Nay, even among thoſe who are inſtructed in ſeveral branches of human ſcience, it is aſtoniſhing to think what ignorance there is of every thing that relates to religion.

If accident or curioſity has brought this diſcourſe into the hands of any ſuch, let me intreat their attention for a little. I beſeech you to think upon, and tremble at your ſtate. You may have ſome ſort of a nominal belief of an unſeen, unintelligible being, called God, while you know neither "what you ſpeak, nor whereof you af-"firm." You may perhaps have heard, or rather in our happy native country you cannot but have heard of Chriſt Jeſus, the Son of God,

ſtiled often the Saviour of ſinners; but you "know "neither the Father nor the Son." You know not God as Creator, nor, by conſequence, your obligations and duty to him, or your apoſtacy and departure from both. You know not what ſin is, and, therefore, you cannot know a Saviour. If ever you come to true religion at all, light will break in upon you in your darkneſs, you will no more be able to forget God, he will follow you into your ſecret chambers, he will come home upon you, and aſſault you, as it were, with the reality of his preſence, with the ſanctity and purity of his nature, and the terrible majeſty of his power. O how great is the effect of a real diſcovery of the divine glory, whether in the word, or by the providence of God; to a ſaint or to a ſinner. Hear how Job expreſſes himſelf. "I have heard of thee by the hearing "of the ear, but now mine eye ſeeth thee, "wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt "and aſhes *." We have the ſame thing well deſcribed by the prophet Iſaiah, as the effect of divine power in deſolating judgments. "Enter "into the rock, and hide thee in the duſt, for "the fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his "majeſty. The lofty looks of man ſhall be "humbled, and the haughtineſs of men ſhall be "bowed down, and the Lord alone ſhall be ex-

* Job xlii. 5, 6.

"alted

"alted in that day.—And they ſhall go into the "holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the "earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory "of his majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake ter- "ribly the earth. In that day a man ſhall caſt "his idols of ſilver, and his idols of gold, which "they made each one for himſelf to worſhip, to "the moles and to the bats, to go into the clefts "of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged "rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory "of his majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake ter- "ribly the earth *." So ſoon as it pleaſes God to open your eyes upon himſelf, with whom you have to do, it will humble you in the duſt, it will diſcover your danger, it will make redemption precious to you, and the name of a Saviour unſpeakably dear.

2. The ſame thing ſhews the danger of error, as well as ignorance. Among many looſe and pernicious principles, which are zealouſly ſpread, and blindly embraced in this age, one of the moſt prevailing and dangerous is, the innocence of error. "O, ſay ſome, every man is to enquire "freely, and each will embrace what appears to "him to be the truth. It is no matter what a "man believes, if his life be good. Even he who "miſtakes, may be as acceptable to God as his "oppoſite, if he is equally ſincere." Now there

† Iſaiah ii. 10, 11, 19, 20, 21.

is no doubt, that liberty to enquire freely is an ineſtimable bleſſing, and impartiality in religious enquiries an indiſpenſible duty. But the above maxim becomes falſe and dangerous by being carried an exceſſive length; and it is carried to this exceſs by the favour of two ſuppoſitions, which are falſe and groundleſs. The maxim is applied frequently to juſtify an open and virulent oppoſition to the moſt important truths of the goſpel; nay, ſometimes, even a denial of all religion, natural and revealed. To be able to apply it thus, it is neceſſary to ſuppoſe that falſe opinions will have as good an influence upon the heart as true. If this is the caſe, the boaſted privilege of free enquiry is not worth having, and all the labour beſtowed on the ſearch of truth is entirely thrown away. Another ſuppoſition contained in the above maxim is, That a perſon may be as ſincere in embracing groſs falſhoods, as in adhering to the truth. If this be true, our Creator hath not given us the means to diſtinguiſh the one from the other, which is the higheſt impeachment both of his wiſdom and goodneſs.

Such perſons do not conſider, that a corrupt inclination in the heart brings a bias on the judgment, and that when men do not "like to "retain God in their knowledge," he frequently, in his righteous judgment, gives them up to a reprobate mind. Nay, when they reject his

truth from an inward hatred of its purity, he is ſaid to ſend them "ſtrong deluſions," as in the following paſſage: "Becauſe they received "not the love of the truth, that they might be "ſaved, for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong "deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lie, that "they all might be damned who believed not "the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſ-"neſs *." But the nature of regeneration will ſerve, in a peculiar manner, to ſhew the danger of error. If men form wrong notions of God, if they love and worſhip, and reſemble a falſe God, they cannot be renewed, they are not like, and therefore are unfit for the preſence of, the true. Be not deceived, he cannot deny himſelf, and therefore "there is no fellowſhip of "righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs, no com-"munion of light with darkneſs, no concord of "Chriſt with Belial †."

I muſt here, to prevent miſtakes, obſerve that this ought, by no means, to be extended to differences of ſmaller moment, under which I rank all thoſe which regard only the externals of religion. I am fully convinced, that many of very different parties and denominations are building upon the one "foundation laid in Zion" for a ſinner's hope, and that their diſtance and alienation from one another in affection, is very much

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11, 12. † 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

to be regretted. Many will not meet together on earth for the worſhip of God, who ſhall have but one temple, where all the faithful, "from "the eaſt, and from the weſt, from the north, "and from the ſouth, ſhall ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom "of their" eternal "Father." But, after all, I muſt needs alſo believe, that it is poſſible to make ſhipwreck of the faith. This appears plainly from the following, as well as many other paſſages of ſcripture: "But there were falſe pro-"phets alſo among the people, even as there "ſhall be falſe teachers among you, who privily "ſhall bring in damnable hereſies, even deny-"ing the Lord that bought them, and bring "upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction *." If any take up falſe notions of God, or expect ſanctification and eternal life in any other way than he hath pointed out in his word, though they may now build their hope on a fond imagination that he is ſuch an one as themſelves, they ſhall at laſt meet with a dreadful diſappointment in this awful ſentence, "Depart from me, I know ye "not, ye workers of iniquity."

* 2 Peter ii. 1.

SECT. II.

There muſt be a diſcovery of the infinite glory of God.

IN the ſecond place, As there muſt be a diſcovery of the real nature, ſo alſo of the infinite glory of God. He muſt not only be ſeen to be juſt ſuch a Being as he really is, but there muſt be a ſenſe of the infinite worth, beauty, and perfection of his character. Theſe two things, though intimately connected, are yet ſo diſtinct from one another, as to deſerve to be ſeparately conſidered. The firſt is neceſſary, but it is not ſufficient alone, or by itſelf. There can be no true religion, unleſs there be a diſcovery of the real nature of God. But though there be a knowledge of what God is, unleſs there be alſo a diſcovery of the excellence and glory of this nature, he can never be the object of eſteem and love. It is one thing to know, and another to approve; and, whilſt this laſt is not the caſe, whatever we may know or affirm, or be perſuaded of, with relation to the Supreme Being, we do not know him to be GOD, nor can poſſibly glorify him as God. This momentous truth we may ſurely comprehend, by what is analogous to it in our experience, between created natures. Speculative knowledge and love are by no means inſeparable. Men may truly know many things

which they ſincerely hate; they may hate them even becauſe they know them: and, when this is the caſe, the more they know them they will hate them with the greater virulence and rancour. This not only may, but always muſt take place, when natures are oppoſite one to another, the one ſinful, for example, and the other holy. The more they are known, the more is their mutual hatred ſtirred up, and their perfect oppoſition to each other becomes, if not more violent, at leaſt more ſenſible.

We have little reaſon to doubt that the fallen angels, thoſe apoſtate ſpirits, have a great degree of ſpeculative knowledge. I would not indeed, take upon me to affirm that they are free from error and miſtake of every kind, yet it ſeems highly probable that they have a clear, though, at the ſame time, a terrible apprehenſion of "what" God is; for they have not the ſame opportunities, or the ſame means of deceiving themſelves, that we have in the preſent ſtate. But do they love him, or ſee his excellence and glory? Very far from it. They believe and tremble; they know God, and blaſpheme. The more they know of him the more they hate him; that is to ſay, their inward, native, habitual hatred is the more ſtrongly excited, and the more ſenſibly felt.

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The caſe is much the ſame with ſome ſinners, when firſt awakened, and it continues to be the ſame ſo long as they are kept in bondage and terror. They have an awful view of the holineſs of God's nature, of the ſtrictneſs of his law, and the greatneſs of his power. This is directly levelled againſt their own corrupt inclinations, and carries nothing with it but a ſentence of condemnation againſt them: "Curſed is every one that "continueth not in all things which are written "in the book of the law, to do them *." This brings forth their enmity, which before, perhaps, lay hid. It is remarkable, that ſome perſons of looſe and diſorderly lives, will ſometimes maintain, at ſtated ſeaſons, a profeſſion of piety. So long as they can keep their conſciences ſtill and quiet by general indiſtinct notions of God, as very eaſy and gentle, no way inclined to puniſh, they think of him without averſion, nay, will go through ſome outward forms with apparent ſatisfaction and delight. Their notion of divine mercy is not a readineſs to pardon the greateſt ſinner on repentance, but a diſpoſition to indulge the ſinner, and wink at his continuance in tranſgreſſion. No ſooner are ſuch perſons brought to a diſcovery of the real character of a holy God, than their thoughts of him are entirely changed. They have gloomy views of his

* Gal. iii. 10.

nature, and harſh thoughts of his providence; they fret at the ſtrictneſs of his law, and, as far as they dare, complain of the tyranny of his government. Their ſentiments are the ſame with thoſe expreſſed by the men of Bethſhemeſh: "Who is able to ſtand before this holy Lord "God, and to whom ſhall he go up from "us *.

I cannot help obſerving, that here we are, if I may ſpeak ſo, at the very fountain-head of error. What is it elſe that makes many frame to themſelves new and flattering ſchemes of religion, that makes them imagine a God ſo extremely different from that holy Being he is repreſented in his own word? When men will not conform their practice to the principles of pure and undefiled religion, they ſcarce ever fail to endeavour to accommodate religion to their own practice. Are there not many who cannot endure the repreſentation of God as holy and jealous, which is given us in ſcripture? With what violence do they oppoſe themſelves to it by carnal reaſonings, and give it the moſt odious and abominable names? The reaſon is plain. Such a view of God ſets the oppoſition of their own hearts to him in the ſtrongeſt light. Two things oppoſite in their nature cannot be approved at once, and, therefore, the conſequence is, God or themſelves

* 1 Sam. vi. 20.

muſt

muſt be held in abhorrence. But we have reaſon to bleſs God, that their reſiſtance to the truth is only a new evidence and illuſtration of it, ſhewing that "the carnal mind is enmity "againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the "law of God, neither indeed can be *." And as this enmity to God diſcovers itſelf in oppoſition to his truth on earth, it will become much more violent, when further reſiſtance is impoſſible. When an unregenerate ſinner enters upon a world of ſpirits, where he has a much clearer ſight and greater ſenſe of what God is, his inherent enmity works to perfection, and he blaſphemes like thoſe devils with whom he muſt for ever dwell.

From all this it will evidently appear, that there muſt be a diſcovery of the glory and beauty of the divine nature, an entire approbation of every thing in God, as perfectly right and abſolutely faultleſs. It is ſelf evident, that without this, there cannot be a ſupreme love to God, in which true religion properly conſiſts; no man can love that which doth not appear to be lovely. But I further add, that this is abſolutely neceſſary to the very beginning of the change, or the foundation on which it is built. It is neceſſary, in order to any genuine, ſalutary convictions of ſin. What is it elſe but a diſco-

* Rom. viii. 7.

very of the ſpotleſs holineſs, the perfect excellence, and infinite amiableneſs of the divine nature, that humbles a ſinner under a ſenſe of his breaches of the divine law? Without this, there may be a ſenſe of weakneſs and ſubjection, but never a ſenſe of duty and obligation. Without this, there may be a fear of wrath, but there cannot be a hatred of ſin.

This ſeems directly to lead to the next great ſtep in a ſaving change, viz. a conviction of ſin and miſery. But before we proceed to point out the progreſs of conviction, it will not be improper to take notice of a few truths which reſult from what hath been already ſaid. This is the more neceſſary, that erroneous or defective views of religion are commonly occaſioned by ſome miſtake in the foundation.

1. The neceſſity of regeneration itſelf appears with peculiar force, from what hath been ſaid on this part of the ſubject. There muſt be a real inward change of heart, before there can be any true religion. If the moral excellence of the divine nature muſt be diſcovered, if God muſt be ſeen as glorious in his holineſs, the heart and temper muſt be changed as well as the life. Nothing is more plain from the holy ſcriptures, than that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and it is equally plain from experience and the nature

nature of the thing. While men continue in the love of ſin, it is impoſſible that they ſhould ſee the beauty of infinite holineſs. So long as they love ſin, they muſt hate holineſs, which is its oppoſite, and not leſs contrary to it than light is to darkneſs. Therefore, all reſtraint upon our outward converſation, all zeal and diligence in expenſive rites and ceremonies; all duties of whatever kind that ariſe from fear, or other external motives, are of no conſequence, till the temper and inclination of the heart is entirely renewed.

2. From what hath been ſaid, we may plainly perceive, that regeneration from firſt to laſt muſt be aſcribed to the agency of the Holy Ghoſt. It muſt be the effect of divine grace, and the work of ſovereign power. Let not any creature be unwilling to ſtand indebted for his new creation to the Author of his firſt being; "for of him, and "through him, and to him, are all things *." While man is in his natural ſtate, he is an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works. The diſcoveries that are made to him of the real nature of God in his works and in his word, while he continues in this diſpoſition, are not amiable but hateful. Nay, he is ſo far from loving him as his father, that he fears him as his enemy. This fear will diſcover itſelf one

* Rom. xi. 36.

of

of theſe two ways. Sometimes it will make the ſinner fly from God, caſt inſtruction behind his back, and increaſe unto more ungodlineſs, till natural conſcience is feared and inſenſible. How many there are of this kind, whom one crime only precipitates into another, experience is a melancholy proof. It is worth while at the ſame time to obſerve what intimations are given us in ſcripture, that this is the firſt and natural effect of ſin upon all, to drive them at a further diſtance from God. Two inſtances of this have been given above. Our firſt parents no ſooner ſinned, than they fled and hid themſelves when they heard God's voice in the garden, as impatient of his approach. A ſimilar reflection we ſee in the apoſtle Peter, on being witneſs to an extraordinary effect of his Saviour's divine power: "And when Simon Peter ſaw it, he fell down "at Jeſus' knees, ſaying, Depart from me, for I "am a ſinful man, O Lord *." See another inſtance of the ſame kind. "And the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes "round about, beſought him to depart from "them, for they were taken with great fear †."

Another common effect of this natural fear, in ſome reſpects contrary to the former, is to diſpoſe men to perform ſome conſtrained and hypocritical ſervices, in order to avoid puniſhment.

* Luke v. 8. † Luke viii. 37.

This

This is deſcribed in the temper and conduct of the children of Iſrael, as repreſented by the Pſalmiſt: "When he ſlew them, then they "ſought him; they returned, and enquired early "after God. And they remembered that God "was their rock, and the high God their re-"deemer. Nevertheleſs they did flatter him "with their mouth, they lied unto him with "their tongues; for their heart was not right "with him, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his "covenant*." Hence it appears, that to a diſcovery of the glory and excellence that is in God, it is neceſſary that we be in ſome meaſure changed into the ſame image. To ſay that this is the effect of our own attempts and endeavours in the way of duty, without the conſtraining power of divine grace, is, when thoroughly examined, a manifeſt contradiction. If perſons endeavour to force or oblige themſelves to love any one, it is a ſure ſign that he is very unlovely in their eyes. Love cannot be forced, or rather to ſpeak more properly, forced love is not love at all. In a word, it is our indiſpenſible duty to attend to every dictate of conſcience, and to follow it ſo far as it goes; but I cannot help thinking, that for a ſinner truly and ſincerely to deſire a change of nature, would be an evidence of a change begun. Therefore,

* Pſ. lxxviii. 34, 35, 36, 37.

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till a ſinner get a ſupernatural illumination, he can never ſee the glory and beauty of the divine character. Before this, he may ſeek to propitiate God's favour, he may wiſh to avoid his wrath; he may deſire a change in God for his own ſafety, but he cannot be ſatisfied with him as he really is. It muſt be the ſame almighty power, which brought the world out of nothing into being, that muſt bring back the ſinner from his rebellion and apoſtacy, according to that promiſe, evidently applicable to the Saviour; "Thy people ſhall be willing in the day "of thy power, in the beauties of holineſs *." Neither is the ſame thing leſs clearly aſſerted in the new teſtament; "For it is God which "worketh in you, both to will and to do of "his good pleaſure †."

3. Hence we may ſee wherein lies the fundamental eſſential difference between common or imperfect convictions, and the effectual ſanctifying and ſaving influences of the Holy Ghoſt. The firſt ariſe from a view of the natural perfections of God, from a belief of his power and ſeverity, without any diſcovery of his righteouſneſs and glory. Therefore, however great a length they may proceed, however different or oppoſite their effects may be, they never produce

* Pſ. cx. 3. † Phil. ii. 13.

any

any real change in the heart. It is of great conſequence to attend to this important diſtinction, for tho' imperfect convictions ſometimes are entirely effaced, and are followed by no laſting effect at all, yet it is often otherwiſe. They frequently produce a counterfeit religion, which not only continues for a time, but is carried down by ſome to the grave as a lie in their right-hand. So ſubtle are the deceits of Satan, that there are many hollow forms of religion, not only upon a legal, but an evangelical bottom. I ſhall give the reader a ſketch of the principles and outlines of both.

There are ſome legal hypocrites. Awakened to a ſenſe of their danger merely from the irreſiſtible power of God, they fall to the exerciſe of repentance, and hope that by ſo doing they may live. Hence the whole ſyſtem of bodily penance and mortification. Hence alſo ſo ſtrong an attachment, in ſome wordly perſons, to the external forms of religion, and veneration for the places of divine worſhip. Being now ſomewhat more regular and decent in their ordinary carriage than before, they entertain a fond hope that all ſhall be well. In the meantime, they are ſo far from being reſtored to the image of God, or being governed by his love, that all this is a burden to them; and indeed it is becauſe it is a burden, that they are ſo prone

to

to think it meritorious. Conſcience checks them, and they dare not run to the ſame exceſs with others, or even repeat what they themſelves did formerly; and by this compariſon, cannot help thinking they are in a hopeful way. But did ſuch perſons reflect a little on the nature of God, they would ſee their error. They would learn, that they are ſo far from being renewed in the ſpirit of their minds, that whatever lengths they go, they are dragged or driven againſt their will; and, whenever they can find a plauſible excuſe, they are ready to withdraw their neck from the yoke. A juſt view of the glory of God, and the obligation upon every rational creature to love and imitate him, would effectually cure them of all ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-dependance; would lead them to himſelf and the grace treaſured up in his Son, to "work in them the "whole good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the "work of faith with power."

On the other hand, there are evangelical hypocrites. Theſe begin upon the ſame principles, and their views have the ſame radical defect with the former. They are awakened to a ſenſe of danger, and ſometimes made to tremble thro' fear of divine judgments, but without any diſcovery of the glory and amiableneſs of the divine nature. If ſuch perſons happen to live in a family or congregation, where they hear much of the doctrine

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of redemption, it may have its place in their ſcheme. They may be ſo convinced of their own manifold tranſgreſſions, as to be ſatisfied to throw their guilt upon the ſurety, and rely on the ſufferings and death of Chriſt, for deliverance from the wrath of an offended God. Nay, I have not the leaſt doubt that ſome may, by a confident preſumption, imitate the faith of God's elect, and believe that Chriſt died for themſelves in particular. So long as this perſuaſion can maintain its ground, it may, and muſt give them great joy and ſatisfaction. Who would not find conſolation in thinking themſelves in ſafety from divine wrath? Yet all this while they never ſee the evil of ſin in itſelf, as an oppoſition to the nature, and a breach of the law of God. They are never brought to love an infinitely holy God in ſincerity of heart. They may love him, becauſe they ſuppoſe themſelves the peculiar objects of his love, with ſome obſcure confuſed, ſenſual idea of the delights of heaven; but they know not or conſider not, the nature of that ſalvation he hath provided for his choſen.

All ſuch love, it is plain, ariſeth from a falſe confidence in their own ſtate, and not from a true knowledge of God. Their notions of God's love to them contain more of a partial indulgence to them as they are, than of his infinite compaſ-

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ſion in forgiving what they have been. The effects of ſuch religion are juſt what might be expected from its nature, violent and paſſionate for a ſeaſon, and commonly oſtentatious, but temporary and changeable. Self-love lies at the root, and therefore, while they are pleaſed and gratified, they will continue their profeſſion of attachment; but when ſelf-denial or bearing the croſs is required, they reject the terms, they loſe their tranſporting views, and return to their ſins.

There are many examples of this, not only in ſcripture, but in the hiſtory of the church in every age. Many of thoſe diſciples who ſeemed gladly to embrace the doctrine, and highly to honour the perſon of Chriſt, when they heard ſome of the moſt mortifying precepts, "went "back and walked no more with him *." The character is little different, which we find deſcribed under the image of the ſtony ground hearers, who "having not root in themſelves, "when perſecution or tribulation aroſe becauſe "of the word, by and by were offended." I hope this, with the explication above given of its cauſe, may be of uſe to account for ſome appearances in a time of the revival of religion. Perſons who ſeem to have the ſame exerciſes with real converts, yet afterwards fall away, and "return with the dog to his vomit again,

* John vi. 60.

"and

"and with the ſow that was waſhed to her "wallowing in the mire." This gives occaſion to adverſaries to ſpeak reproachfully, and is greatly diſtreſſing to thoſe who truly fear God. But would men carefully attend to what the holy ſcriptures teach us to expect, their ſurpriſe in all ſuch caſes would ceaſe. "For it muſt needs "be that offences muſt come *." And though there are many counterfeits, there will ſtill be ſufficient means to diſtinguiſh the gold from the droſs.

SECT. III.

There muſt be a conviction of ſin and danger.

THE next great ſtep in a ſaving change, is a deep humiliation of mind, and conviction of ſin and danger. The abſolute neceſſity of this is very evident, and indeed generally confeſſed. It is equally evident, whether we conſider the nature of the change itſelf, the means of its production, or the motives to all future duty. If an entire change is neceſſary, there muſt be an entire and thorough diſſatisfaction with, and diſapprobation of, our paſt character and ſtate. Whoever is pleaſed with his preſent character, will neither deſire, endeavour, nor even accept of a change. If we conſider the means of our recovery, by Jeſus Chriſt ſuffering in the room

* Matt. xviii. 7.

of

of ſinners, the ſame thing will appear with increaſing evidence. Thoſe who are not humbled under a ſenſe of guilt and corruption, will treat with great contempt a purchaſed pardon and a crucified Saviour. This our Lord himſelf often tells us in the plaineſt terms. "They that "are whole need not a phyſician, but they that "are ſick. I came not to call the righteous, "but ſinners to repentance *." To theſe indeed his invitation and call is particularly addreſſed: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, "and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt †."

To the ſame purpoſe we ſhall find many other paſſages, both of the prophetic and apoſtolic writings. The glad tidings of ſalvation are always directed to the humble, miſerable, broken-hearted, thirſty, periſhing ſoul. Thus in the prophet Iſaiah, "Ho, every one that thirſteth, "come ye to the waters; and he that hath no "money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come "buy wine and milk, without money and with-"out price ‡." When Chriſt entered on his perſonal miniſtry, he opened his commiſſion in the following terms. "The Spirit of the Lord "is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me "to preach the goſpel to the poor; he hath "ſent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach

* Luke v. 31, 32. † Matt. xi. 29. ‡ Iſ. lv. 1.

"de-

" deliverance to the captives, and recovering of " ſight to the blind; to ſet at liberty them " that are bruiſed, to preach the acceptable " year of the Lord *." I ſhall only mention one other paſſage: " And I will give to him " that is athirſt of the fountain of the water " of life freely †."

From theſe paſſages, and many others in the ſame ſtrain, it is evident beyond contradiction, that there muſt be a deep humiliation of mind, and ſenſe of guilt and wretchedneſs, before a ſinner can be brought unto God. This indeed hath ordinarily been conſidered as the firſt ſtep towards converſion. In order to treat of it in the moſt clear, and at the ſame time the moſt uſeful manner, I ſhall divide it into two branches; and firſt, conſider what is the true and genuine ſource of conviction or ſorrow for ſin; and ſecondly, to what degree it muſt be, in order to a ſaving change.

Firſt then, let us conſider what is the true and genuine ſource of conviction and ſorrow for ſin. And here we may obſerve in general, that, properly ſpeaking, there can be but two ſources of ſorrow or humiliation of mind at all, viz. fear of ſuffering, and ſenſe of the evil and deſert of ſin. Both theſe are found in true penitents; and it is their union and mutual influence that diſ-

* Luke iv. 18. † Rev. xxi. 6.

tinguiſhes

tinguiſhes repentance unto life from every counterfeit. Many have trembled through fear of puniſhment from God, and been diſmayed at the tokens of his preſence, who, notwithſtanding, lived and died ſtrangers to true religion, or any ſaving change. We ſee that even Judas the traitor to his Lord repented, confeſſed his ſin, nay, did what he could to repair the wrong, throwing back the price of innocent blood; and yet hanged himſelf in deſpair. The ſcripture only further ſays, he went into his own place; but there have been few, if any, interpreters of ſcripture, who entertained any doubt that it was the place of torment. We every day ſee that occaſional danger, or the apprehenſion of immediate death, throws ſome into fits of terror, extorts from them confeſſions of guilt, or promiſes of amendment; and yet, in a little time they return to their former practices, and ſin with the ſame ſecurity, and perhaps with greater avidity than before.

What is the eſſential defect of ſuch ſeeming penitents? It is that they have no juſt ſenſe of the evil of ſin in itſelf; they have no inward cordial approbation of the holineſs of God's nature and law, or of the juſtice of that ſentence of condemnation which ſtands written againſt every tranſgreſſor. Here, O Chriſtian,

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is the cardinal point on which true repentance turns, and the reader may plainly perceive the reaſon and neceſſity of what was formerly obſerved, that there muſt be a diſcovery of the infinite glory and amiableneſs of the divine nature. Without this there may be a ſlaviſh terror, but no true humiliation. It is only when a ſinner ſees the unſpeakable majeſty, the tranſcendent glory, and infinite amiableneſs of the divine nature, that he is truly, effectually, and unfeignedly humbled.

Oh! that I could deliver this with proper force! that I could write and ſpeak under an experimental ſenſe of its truth! The ſinner then perceives how infinitely worthy his Maker is of the higheſt eſteem, the moſt ardent love, and the moſt unremitted obedience. He then ſees, that every intelligent creature, from the moſt ſhining ſeraph in the heavenly hoſt, to the meaneſt and moſt deſpiſed mortal worm, is under an infinite, eternal, unchangeable obligation to love God with all his heart, and ſtrength, and mind. On this account he is convinced, that alienated affection and miſplaced allegiance is infinitely ſinful. He ſees this obligation to be founded not merely nor chiefly on the greatneſs of divine power, but on the intrinſic inherent excellence of the divine nature. Therefore he is perſuaded, that there is not only danger in rebelling againſt, or diſ-

honouring God, but a great and manifeſt wrong and injuſtice in refuſing to honour him. This ſtrikes him with a ſenſe of his own guilt, and the guilt of all thoſe who live "without God in the world."

At once to confirm and illuſtrate this truth, I muſt make two obſervations, which will be found univerſally to hold, on the character and conduct of true penitents. 1ſt, That they obtain a new ſenſe of the excellence and obligation of the duties of divine worſhip, both public and private. Before, they were apt to conſider the duties of worſhip as little more than the means of religion; that the fear of an inviſible Judge might be a bond upon the conſcience, and keep men from fraud and diſhoneſty, or from riot and ſenſuality. They were cold and formal therefore in their own attendance, and never heard any ſpeak of joy or ſenſible communion with God in his ſanctuary, but they were ready to expreſs their deteſtation of it as hypocriſy, or their contempt of it as enthuſiaſm and folly.

But now the language of adoration is in ſome meaſure underſtood, which had been wholly inſipid and without meaning before. They join with the pſalmiſt in ſaying, "Honour and ma-"jeſty are before him, ſtrength and beauty are "in his ſanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye "kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord "glory

"glory and ſtrength. Give unto the Lord the "glory due unto his name; bring an offering, "come into his courts. O worſhip the Lord in "the beauty of holineſs; fear before him all the "earth *." See alſo theſe elevated ſtrains of praiſe, which, whether they are meant as the exerciſe of the church militant on earth, or the church triumphant in heaven, are equally proper here. "And the four beaſts had each of them "ſix wings about him, and they were full of eyes within; and they reſt not day and night, "ſaying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God al-"mighty, which was, and is, and is to come. "And when thoſe beaſts give glory and honour, "and thanks to him that ſat on the throne, "who liveth for ever and ever; the four and "twenty elders fall down before him that ſat on "the throne, and worſhip him that liveth for "ever and ever, and caſt their crowns before "the throne, ſaying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, "to receive glory, and honour, and power; for "thou haſt created all things, and for thy plea-"ſure they are, and were created †." And to the ſame purpoſe, "And I beheld, and I heard "the voice of many angels round about the "throne, and the beaſts, and the elders: and "the number of them was ten thouſand times

* Pſal. xcvi. 6, 7, 8, 9. † Rev. iv. 8, 9, 10, 11.

" ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands;
" ſaying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb
" that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches,
" and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and
" glory, and bleſſing. And every creature which
" is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the
" earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that
" are in them, heard I, ſaying, bleſſing, and
" honour, and glory, and power be unto him
" that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the
" Lamb for ever and ever *." Nay, a true penitent begins to ſee the beauty even of the divine ſovereignty, that all things belong to God, and therefore it is moſt fit that all things ſhould be ſubject to him, according to that ſtrong and beautiful paſſage: " And the four and twenty
" elders which ſat before God on their ſeats, fell
" upon their faces, and worſhipped God, ſay-
" ing, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Al-
" mighty, which art, and waſt, and art to come,
" becauſe thou haſt taken to thee thy great
" power, and haſt reigned †."

The other obſervation I am to make is, that a true penitent always acquires the deepeſt abhorrence of that attrocious, tho' prevailing ſin, of profaning the name of God in common diſcourſe. There are many perſons, not otherwiſe

* Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. † Rev. xi. 16, 17.

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the moſt abandoned, who have no juſt ſenſe of the heinouſneſs of this ſin: and as it is not directly levelled againſt the temporal intereſt of our neighbours, it is far from being generally ſo ſcandalous and diſhonourable as it ought to be. Such religion or virtue as is founded on worldly principles and views, may eaſily conſiſt with its continuance; but he who is convinced of the evil of all ſin, as rebellion againſt, and diſobedience to God, will ſee the horrible guilt and impiety that attends this abominable practice. That religion which is the work of God's holy Spirit, and conſiſts in the recovery of his loſt image, will never be able to bear ſo direct a violation of his ſacred authority, ſo unprovoked an inſult upon his honour and glory.

A fear of puniſhment then we have ſeen, without a ſenſe of the evil of ſin in itſelf, is not ſufficient. Let me now add, that this diſcovery of the evil of ſin in itſelf, muſt increaſe our fear of puniſhment, by ſhewing it to be juſt. A fear of puniſhment while alone, always tempts the ſinner to ſearch about on all hands for arguments againſt that ſuffering, the juſtice of which he cannot perceive. Hence infidelity of heart and ſecret ſuggeſtions, that ſurely it cannot be that God will puniſh as he hath ſaid. Hence blaſphemous impatience. Hence riſing thoughts and rebellion

againſt God, even while under his rod; ſuch as are deſcribed by the prophet Hoſea: "And they "have not cried unto me with their heart when "they howled upon their beds *." Nay, hence ſometimes the bittereſt profeſſed infidels among thoſe, who have been brought up in the knowledge of the truths of the goſpel, while they have never ſeen their beauty, or felt their power. But ſo ſoon as there is a diſcovery of the glory of God, and the univerſal and perfect obedience due from all to him, this throws a new light on the tokens of a divine diſpleaſure againſt ſin, in the works of creation and providence. This carries home, with irreſiſtible force, all the threatnings of the wrath of God againſt ſinners in his word. Their juſtice is then deeply and inwardly felt, and the ſinner begins to wonder at the patience of a long-ſuffering God, that has not long ere now made him a monument of vengeance.

The ſame view it is that not only begins, but carries on and compleats genuine convictions of ſin, that ſilences all objections, and refutes the reaſonings of the carnal mind. Every ſincere convert will have, in a greater or leſſer degree, the evidence in himſelf, that his change is of ſovereign grace. He will probably be able to recollect in how many inſtances his mind ſet itſelf to oppoſe, and was at pains as it were to collect

* Hoſea vii. 14.

and

and muſter up every objection againſt the obligation and ſanction of the law of God. The objections are raiſed, firſt, againſt the neceſſity or benefit of obedience, and then againſt ſuffering for diſobedience, till all are borne down by the ſame almighty power which ſpake and it was done, and which can "lead captivity captive." I cannot propoſe to enumerate all the objections, or rather, all the forms, in which objections may ariſe in the ſinner's mind, when ſtruggling againſt conviction; but I ſhall mention a few of them, and ſhow what it is that muſt put them to ſilence.

1. Perhaps the ſinner will ſay, alas! why ſhould the law be ſo extremely rigorous, as to inſiſt upon abſolute and ſinleſs obedience? Hard indeed, that it will not admit of any tranſgreſſion, any omiſſion, the leaſt ſlip, or failing or frailty, but pronounceth ſo ſevere a ſentence, "Curſed "is every one that continueth not in all things "which are written in the book of the law to "do them *." But conſider, I pray you, what "is the law, and who is the author of the law. The ſum of all the commandments of the law is, "To love the Lord your God with all your "heart, with all your ſoul, with all your mind, "and with all your ſtrength." Is this unreaſonable? or, is it too much? Is he not infinite-

* Gal. iii. 10.

ly amiable, and abſolutely perfect? Is he not the juſt and legitimate object of ſupreme love? Is not every defect of love to God eſſentially ſinful? and can it be otherwiſe conſidered? He is a God of truth, who will not, and who cannot lie. He muſt therefore aſſert his own majeſty and right, and ſay, as in the prophet, "Is there "a God beſides me? yea, there is no God? I "know not any *." A diſcovery of the glory of God at once ſilences this objection, and ſhows that he aſks but his due; and as he is the unchangeable God, any abatement in the demands of the law not only would be unreaſonable, but is in truth impoſſible.

2. Again, the ſinner will perhaps ſay, "But "why ſhould the ſentence be ſo ſevere? The "law may be right in itſelf, but it is hard, or "even impoſſible for me. I have no ſtrength: "I cannot love the Lord with all my heart. I "am altogether inſufficient for that which is "good." Oh that you would but conſider what ſort of inability you are under to keep the commandments of God! Is it natural, or is it moral? Is it really want of ability, or is it only want of will? Is it any thing more than the depravity and corruption of your hearts, which is itſelf criminal, and the ſource of all actual tranſ-

* Iſ. xliv. 8.

greſſions?

greſſions? Have you not natural faculties, an underſtanding will, and affections, a wonderful frame of body, and a variety of members? What is it that hinders them all from being conſecrated to God? Are they not as proper in every reſpect for his ſervice, as for any baſer purpoſe? When you are commanded to love God with all your heart, this ſurely is not demanding more than you can pay: for if you give it not to him, you will give it to ſomethimg elſe, that is far from being ſo deſerving of it.

The law then is not impoſſible, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, even to you. Let me next aſk you, Is it unreaſonable? Does he aſk any more than all your hearts? and are they not his own? Has he not made them for himſelf? If not, let any rival riſe up and plead his title to a ſhare? Does he aſk any more than that you ſhould love him ſupremely? and is he not every way worthy of your love? If he commanded you to love what was not amiable, there would be reaſon for complaint. By tracing the matter thus to its ſource, we ſee the righteouſneſs and equity of the divine procedure, and that the law of God is eternal and immutable, as his own nature. Wherefore "let God be true, and every man a "liar." All the attempts to impeach his conduct as ſevere, only tend to ſhow the obliquity

and perverſeneſs of the depraved creature, and not to diminiſh the excellence of the all-glorious Creator.

While men continue ſlaves to ſin, it is abſurd to ſuppoſe they ſhould acquieſce in their Maker's authority: but ſo ſoon as any perſon diſcovers the infinite amiableneſs of God, and his obligation to love and ſerve him, his mouth will be immediately ſtopped, himſelf and every other ſinner brought in inexcuſably guilty. He will ſee that there is nothing to hinder his compliance with every part of his duty, but that inward averſion to God, which, is the very eſſence of ſin. It is of no conſequence what your natural powers are, whether thoſe of an angel or a man, a philoſopher or a clown, if ſoul and body, and ſuch powers as you have, are but wholly devoted to God. Do you ſay this is impoſſible? where then lies the impoſſibility of it, but in your depraved inclinations?

But we have not yet done with the objections; the moſt formidable of all is behind. Perhaps the ſinner will ſay, How unfortunate ſoever this inclination may be, I brought it into the world with me: I derived it from my parents; it is my very nature; I am not able to reſiſt it. This brings in view a ſubject far more extenſive than to admit of being fully handled here. We may

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alſo eaſily allow, that there is ſomething in it beyond the reach of our limited capacity: but whatever be the nature and effects, or manner of communicating original ſin; whatever be the uſe made of it, in accounting for events as a general cauſe; if any voluntary agent hath nothing to offer in oppoſition to the ſtrongeſt obligation, but that he finds himſelf utterly unwilling to obey, it ſeems to be an excuſe of a very extraordinary kind. We are ſure that no ſuch excuſe would be accepted by an earthly law-giver; nor have we the leaſt reaſon to think, any more regard will be paid to it by him "who judgeth righteouſly."

In this, as in moſt other things, there is a wide difference between the ſentiments of a hardened and a convinced ſinner. The firſt, who hath no juſt view of the guilt of his actual tranſgreſſions, is always prone to extenuate them, by introducing original ſin as an excuſe for his conduct: but a ſinner, truly convinced of the evil of his felt and experienced enmity againſt God, makes uſe of his early and original depravity for his further humiliation. Thus the pſalmiſt David, when under the exerciſe of penitence for the complicated crimes of adultery and murder, expreſſes himſelf as follows; "Behold, I was "ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did my mother "conceive me *." In whatever way it was firſt

* Pſ. li. 5.

introduced, it is certain that all averſion and oppoſition to God muſt be evil in itſelf, and the ſource of miſery to him in whom it dwells; for all that "are afar off from him" ſhall certainly periſh; and all that continue unlike to him muſt depart from him. Without perplexing ourſelves with debates about the propriety or meaning of the imputation of Adam's firſt ſin, this we may be ſenſible of, that the guilt of all inherent corruption muſt be perſonal, becauſe it is voluntary and conſented to. Of both theſe things, a diſcovery of the glory of God will powerfully convince the ſinner. When he ſeeth the infinite beauty of holineſs, and the amiableneſs of the divine nature, he cannot forbear crying out of himſelf, "Woe is me, for I am undone, becauſe "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in "the midſt of a people of unclean lips; for mine "eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of hoſts *" As the impurity of his heart, ſo the irregularities of his life will ſtare him in the face: they never appear ſo hateful, as when brought into compariſon with the divine holineſs; and if he eſſay "to juſtify himſelf his own mouth will con-"demn him" as guilty from choice.

Once more, the ſame view will effectually confute, and ſhew the vanity of, thoſe pretenſions which are derived from our own imperfect

* Iſ. vi. 5.

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and defective obedience. When conviction firſt lays hold of a ſinner, however vain the attempt, he has ſtill a ſtrong inclination that righteouſneſs "ſhould come by the law." This is not wonderful; for in no other way can he himſelf have any title to glory, and a thorough renunciation of all ſelf-intereſt, is too great a ſacrifice to be made at once. Hence he is ready to look with ſome meaſure of ſatisfaction on thoſe who have been greater ſinners than himſelf, and ſecretly to found his expectation of pardon for thoſe ſins he hath committed, on the ſuperior heinouſneſs of thoſe from which he hath abſtained. Hence alſo he is ready to hope he may make ſufficient atonement for his paſt ſins by future amendment: but a diſcovery of the holineſs of God, and the obligation to love him with all the heart, and ſoul, and ſtrength, and mind, ſoon deſtroys this fond imagination. It ſhews him that he can at no time do more than his duty; that he never can have any abounding or ſoliciting merit. nay, that a whole eternity, ſo to ſpeak, of perfect obedience, would do juſt nothing at all towards expiating the guilt of the leaſt ſin. But beſides all this, the ſame thing ſhews him, that his beſt duties are ſtained with ſuch ſins and imperfections, that he is ſtill but adding to the charge, inſtead of taking from the old ſcore; for

"we

" we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteouſneſſes are but as filthy rags; and we " all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like " the wind, have carried us away *." Thus, one after another, he is ſtript of every plea, however eagerly he may cleave to them, and ſupport or bolſter up one, by the addition of another. He ſees not only his danger, but his guilt; not only the fearfulneſs of his ſtate, but the holineſs and righteouſneſs of his judge. He lies down proſtrate at the foot-ſtool of the Almighty, and makes unmerited mercy and ſovereign grace the only foundation of his hope.

SECT. IV.

Of the degree of ſorrow for ſin in true penitents.

HAVING thus conſidered the proper ſource of genuine conviction and ſorrow for ſin, it was propoſed next to enquire, to what degree it muſt be, in order to a ſaving change. The truth is, were not this a queſtion often propoſed, and the reſolution of it deſired by ſerious perſons, the weakeſt of whom deſerve all attention and regard from every miniſter of Chriſt, I ſhould have left it altogether untouched. The reaſon of this obſervation is, that I am perſuaded, and take the

* Iſaiah lxiv. 6.

preſent

preſent opportunity of affirming it, that the chief diſtinction between convictions genuine or ſalutary, and ſuch as are only tranſitory and fruitleſs does not lie in their ſtrength and violence, ſo much as their principle and ſource, which has been formerly explained.

There is often as great, or, perhaps, it may be ſafely ſaid, there is often a greater degree of terror in perſons brought under occaſional convictions, which are afterwards fruitleſs, than in others in whom they are the introduction to a ſaving change. It is probable that the horror of mind which poſſeſſed Cain after his brother's murder, was of the moſt terrible kind. It is probable that the humiliation of Ahab, after he had cauſed Naboth to be deſtroyed by falſe evidence, and was threatened with a dreadful viſitation, was exceeding great. It is probable that the mere paſſion of fear in either of theſe criminals was equal, if not ſuperior, to the fear of any true penitent recorded in ſcripture. It is the principle that diſtinguiſhes their nature, it is the differing principle that produces oppoſite effects. The one is alarmed and trembles through fear of wrath from an irreſiſtible and incenſed God; the other is truly ſenſible of ſin in all its malignity, and fears the ſanction of a righteous but violated law. The one feels himſelf a miſerable creature; the other confeſſes himſelf a guilty ſinner. The one is terrified, and the other is humbled.

It

It is ſome doubt with me, whether in fruitleſs convictions there is any ſenſe at all of ſin, as ſuch; I mean as truly meriting puniſhment from a juſt and holy God. Such perſons ordinarily are diſpleaſed at the holineſs of God's nature, and murmur at the ſtrictneſs of his law; and therefore, however much they may dread ſuffering here or hereafter, they cannot be ſaid to be convinced of ſin. We have ſeen ſome who, when afflictions brought their ſins to remembrance were but driven on, by deſpair, to higher degrees of guilt, and, the more they ſeemed to fear the approaching judgment of God, only increaſed in the impatience of blaſpheming rage.

However, as there is great meaſure of deceit in the human heart, ſome may be ready to flatter themſelves, on the one hand, that they have ſeen the evil of ſin in itſelf; and ſome, on the other, to fear that they have not ſeen it as they ought, becauſe their ſorrow has not riſen to the requiſite degree. Many have expreſſed uneaſineſs that they never mourned for ſin in a manner correſponding to the ſtrong ſcripture declarations of its odious and hateful nature, or to the following deſcription of goſpel penitents: "And I will "pour upon the houſe of David, and upon the "inhabitanrs of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace "and ſupplication, and they ſhall look upon me "whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn

"for

" for him as one mourneth for his only ſon, and " ſhall be in bitterneſs for him, as one that is in " bitterneſs for his firſt-born *." For this reaſon I ſhall make an obſervation or two on the degree of ſorrow for ſin in true penitents, which may enable us to judge in every queſtion of the ſame nature.

1. One thing, in general, muſt be carefully remembered, that we ought not to lay down one rule for all perſons. We are not to meaſure the ſorrow of any true penitent, and make a ſtandard from it for the effects or expreſſions of ſorrow in any other. The ſtrength of all the paſſions, and their readineſs to expreſs themſelves, is greater naturally in ſome than in others. There is nothing of which men may be more ſenſible from daily experience. Love and hatred, joy and grief, deſire and averſion, ſhew themſelves by much more violent emotions in ſome than in others. It would be wrong, therefore, to reduce all to one rule, and none ought to look upon it as a juſt cauſe of diſquiet, that they have not had the ſame degree or depth of diſtreſs and anguiſh which others have had, of whom they have read or heard. Another circumſtance may alſo be the occaſion of diverſity. In ſome, convictions may have been more early and gradual, and, therefore leſs violent and ſenſible. It is not to be ſuppoſed

* Zech. xii. 10.

that

that Samuel, whoſe very conception was the anſwer of prayer, who was called from his mother's womb, and ſerved in the temple from his being a child, ſhould have experienced the ſame depth of humiliation with ſuch as Manaſſeh, for example, who had been guilty of many atrocious crimes, and continued long in a hardened and inſenſible ſtate. Therefore,

2. Suffer me to obſerve, that the great and principal evidence of a proper degree of conviction and ſorrow for ſin, is its permanency and practical influence. Genuine conviction is not a flaſh of fervour, however ſtrong, but a deep abiding, and governing principle, which will ſhew its ſtrength by its habitual power over its oppoſite. Every true penitent will join in theſe words of Elihu: "Surely it is meet to be ſaid "unto God I have borne chaſtiſement, I will "not offend any more: that which I ſee not "teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will "do no more*." Nothing elſe will be a ſufficient evidence of penitence, where this is wanting; and where this is the caſe, nothing can be wanting that is really neceſſary. This may, perhaps, as I obſerved on another part of this diſcourſe, be thought too general, but I am perſuaded it is the only ſafe ground to build upon, according to the ſcriptures. Every other claim

* Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

of

of relation will be rejected at laſt by our Saviour and Judge, as he hath plainly told us: "Not "every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, lord, ſhall "enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that "doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. "Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, lord, "have we not propheſied in thy name? and in "thy name caſt out devils? and in thy name "done many wonderful works? And then will I "profeſs unto them, I never new you, depart "from me ye that work iniquity *."

Would any know, therefore, whether their ſorrow for ſin hath been to the requiſite degree, let me intreat them to ſuffer conſcience to anſwer honeſtly to the following interrogatories. Has your conviction of ſin been ſuch as to make you abhor and hate it, in every form? Hath it been ſuch as to make you reſolve upon a thorough and perpetual ſeparation from your once beloved pleaſures? Does it make you ready to examine the lawfulneſs of every purſuit, and to abſtain even from every doubtful or ſuſpected practice? Is there no known ſin that you are deſirous to excuſe or palliate, ſtudious to conceal, or willing to ſpare? Remember this neceſſary caution of our Saviour; "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, "and caſt it from thee: for it is profitable for "thee that one of thy members ſhould periſh,

* Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23.

"and

" and not that thy whole body ſhould be caſt in-
" to hell. And if thy right-hand offend thee,
" cut it off, and caſt it from thee: for it is pro-
" fitable for thee that one of thy members ſhould
" periſh, and not that thy whole body ſhould be
" caſt into hell *." Is there no ſin, however long practiſed, or however greatly delighted in; is there no ſin, however gainful or honourable, but you deſire liberty from its enſlaving power, as well as deliverance from its condemning guilt? Is there no part of the law of God, of the duty and character of a Chriſtian, however ungrateful to a covetous heart, however deſpiſed by a ſcorning world, but you acknowledge its obligation? Would you, indeed, rather be holy than great? Do you rather chooſe perſecution with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon? See what terms Chriſt makes with his diſciples: " If any man will come after me, let
" him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and
" follow me: for whoſoever will ſave his life
" ſhall loſe it, and whoſoever will loſe his life,
" for my ſake, ſhall find it †." Upon the whole, inſtead of finding fault with the duty or lot of God's children, can you truly ſay, " O that
" there were ſuch an heart in me that I could
" keep his ſtatutes! The law of the Lord is per-
" fectly holy. The paths of the Lord toward

* Matt v. 29, 30. † Matt. xvi. 24.

" me

" me have been infinitely gracious. My heart
" only is exceeding ſinful. O Lord, write thy
" law in my heart, and put it in my inward
" parts: give me a new heart and a new ſpirit,
" and cauſe me to walk in thy ſtatutes, and keep
" thy judgments, and do them."

3. It is an excellent evidence of conviction's being right in both principle and in degree, when the penitent hath a greater fear of ſin than of ſuffering. As the great ſource of genuine conviction of ſin is a ſenſe of its evil in itſelf, rather than an apprehenſion of its conſequences even in the life to come, there is no way in which this will diſcover itſelf more diſtinctly, than in the views we have of ſin, and ſuffering in the preſent ſtate. Whether do you grieve moſt heartily for ſin, or for worldly loſſes? Which of them do you avoid with the greateſt ſolicitude and care? Will not this ſhow what it is that lies neareſt your hearts, and hath the dominion there? Will not this ſhow it in a manner that muſt be convincing even to yourſelves, and leave no room to reply? Alas! how heavy a ſentence does this carry againſt many profeſſing Chriſtians? How great their anxiety about the things of time, how little about the concerns of eternity? How carefully will they obſerve the increaſe or decreaſe of their trade and opulence? But how little attention will they pay to the growth or decay of religion in their

hearts? They will dread the arts, and fly from the ſociety, of a fraudulent dealer, but will ſuſpect no danger while their ears are drinking in the poiſon of licentious or impure converſation. The loſs of a child, or the loſs of their ſubſtance, oppreſſes them with ſorrow, while even the commiſſion of groſs ſin, if concealed from the world, produces a reflection ſcarcely felt, and ſpeedily forgotten.

I have ſaid, indeed, above, that all perſons are not equally ſuſceptible of violent emotions of any kind. But what ſhall be ſaid of the ſame perſons, who have the ſtrongeſt paſſions on every other ſubject, and nothing but coldneſs and indifference in matters of religion? What ſhall be ſaid of the ſame perſons, who are eaſily and deeply affected with all temporal ſufferings, and yet are but very ſlightly affected with a ſenſe of the evil of ſin? Whoſe tears flow readily and copiouſly over a dying friend, but have no tears at all to ſhed over a dying Saviour? Does this at all correſpond with the deſcription given by the prophet, "of mourning as for an only ſon;" in which penitential ſorrow is compared to the moſt ſevere and exquiſite of all human calamities. I muſt, however, obſerve, that temporal ſufferings are ordinarily attended and aggravated by ſenſible images, and are alſo ſometimes ſudden and unexpected, on both which accounts they may more

powerfully call forth the expreſſions of ſorrow and ſympathy. But it is not difficult to judge which of them dwells moſt heavily upon the mind, which of them would be firſt avoided by the deliberate choice of the heart. Every true penitent does certainly ſee ſin to be the greateſt of all evils, and will diſcover this by compariſon with all the other evils of which he hath at preſent any knowledge or experience.

4. I ſhall only mention one other evidence of conviction's being to a proper degree, which is when a ſenſe of the evil of ſin is ſtill growing, inſtead of diminiſhing. This will be found eſſentially to diſtinguiſh a ſenſe of the evil of ſin in itſelf, from a mere terror of God's power in taking vengeance on the ſinner. Time gradually weakens the one, but knowledge, and even the mercy of God, continues to increaſe the other. When a ſinner is brought under great convictions, it is a ſtate ſo painful and diſtreſſing, that it cannot continue long. Some kind of peace muſt of neceſſity ſucceed. Either he ſtifles his convictions, hides the danger by ſhutting his own eyes, and returns to his former ſecurity and licentiouſneſs of practice; or he does ſome things for a time, to quiet the cries of conſcience, and lay a foundation for future peace; or, laſtly, he returns to God through Chriſt, by true repentance, and continues to ſerve him in newneſs of life.

The

The firſt of theſe càſes needs no illuſtration; the ſenſe of ſin in all ſuch perſons being not ſo properly weakened as deſtroyed. In the ſecond, the ſinner is under great reſtraints for a ſeaſon, but, when the terror is over, his obedience and diligence is immediately relaxed. This ſhows plainly, that he had no ſincere or cordial affection to the law of God, but was afraid of his power. It ſhews that his convictions never were of a right kind, and, therefore, it is no wonder their ſtrength ſhould decay. But, in every true penitent, a ſenſe of ſin not only continues, but daily increaſes. His growing diſcovery of the glory of God, points out more clearly to him his own corruption and depravity, both in its quantity and its malignity, ſo to ſpeak. The very mercies of God, whatever delight or ſweetneſs they afford, take nothing away from his ſenſe of the evil of his doings, but rather melt him down in penitential ſorrow. They ſerve to cover him with confuſion at his own unworthineſs, and to fill him with wonder at the divine patience and condeſcenſion.

The firſt work of a convinced ſinner is, to mourn over the groſs enormities of a profligate life, or a life devoted to worldly purſuits. And his continued employment after converſion is, to reſiſt and wreſtle with that inherent corruption which was hidden from his view before, but becomes

comes daily more and more ſenſible. So true is this, that I have known many inſtances in which the moſt genuine expreſſions of ſelf-abaſement happening to fall from aged experienced Chriſtians, have appeared to others as little better than affectation. They were not able to conceive the propriety of theſe ſentiments, which long acquaintance with God and with ourſelves doth naturally and infallibly inſpire.

From theſe remarks, let me beg the reader to judge of the reality and progreſs of the ſpiritual life. Does your ſenſe of the evil of ſin not only continue, but grow? Do you now ſee ſin in many things which you never ſuſpected before? Do you ſee more of the boldneſs, ingratitude, and ſottiſh folly of ſinners and deſpiſers of God? Are you daily making new diſcoveries of the vanity, ſenſuality, and treachery of your own hearts? Be not diſcouraged at it, but humbled by it. Let it empty you of all ſelf-eſteem and ſelf-dependence, and give you a higher reliſh of the goſpel of peace. The ſubſtance of the goſpel is "ſal-"vation to the chief of ſinners, by the riches of "divine grace, and the ſanctification of your "polluted natures by the power of the Holy "Ghoſt."

As I would willingly give as much information and inſtruction as poſſible, I ſhall, before quitting this part of the ſubject, ſpeak a few

words of a pretty extraordinary opinion to be found in ſome of the practical writers of the laſt age. It is, that genuine conviction, and the ſoul's ſubjection to God, ought to be carried ſo far in every true penitent, as to make him willing, ſatisfied, and, ſome ſay, even "pleaſed," that God ſhould glorify his juſtice in his everlaſting perdition. This is ſo repugnant to nature, and to that very ſolicitude about our eternal happineſs, by which the conſcience is firſt laid hold of, that it appears to be utterly impoſſible. There have been many to whom this requiſition has given inexpreſſible concern, has been a daily ſnare to their conſcience, and an obſtruction to their peace. There is ſuch an inſeparable connection between our duty and happineſs, that the queſtion ſhould never have been moved; but, for the ſatisfaction of thoſe who may have met, or many ſtill meet with it in authors, otherwiſe deſervedly eſteemed, I ſhall make ſome remarks, which I hope will either explain it in ſound ſenſe, or ſhew it to be at bottom falſe.

Men do often differ more in words than in ſubſtance. Perhaps what theſe authors chiefly mean, is no more than what has been explained above at conſiderable length, viz. That the ſinner finds himſelf without excuſe, his "mouth is "ſtopped," he ſeeth the holineſs of the law, he confeſſeth the juſtice of the ſentence, he quits every

every claim but mercy. Thus he may be ſaid to abſolve or juſtify God, though he ſhould leave him to periſh for ever. So far, I apprehend, it is undeniably juſt; otherwiſe, the very foundation of the goſpel is overthrown, and ſalvation is not "of grace," but of "debt." If we impartially examine the word mercy, and the many ſtrong declarations in ſcripture of our obligations to God for the gift of eternal life, we ſhall find that they cannot, conſiſtently, imply leſs, than that the ſinner "deſerved," and was liable, to "eternal death."

But to carry the thing farther, and to ſay that the penitent muſt be pleaſed and ſatisfied with damnation itſelf, as he is pleaſed with ſuffering in another view, as it is his heavenly Father's ſanctified rod, appears to me to be at once unnatural, unreaſonable, unlawful, and impoſſible. It is plainly contrary to that deſire of our own happineſs which is ſo deeply implanted in our natures, and which ſeems to be inſeparable from a rational creature. No ſuch thing is, either directly or conſequentially, aſſerted in the holy ſcriptures, which ſo often urge us to a due care of our own beſt intereſts. "Wherefore, ſays the prophet, "do you ſpend your money for that which is not "bread, and your labour for that which ſatis-"fieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and "eat ye that which is good, and let your ſoul

" delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your ear, and " come unto me, hear, and your ſouls ſhall live, " and I will make an everlaſting covenant with " you even the ſure mercies of David *." Further, the propoſition ſeems to me neceſſarily to imply an impoſſibility in itſelf. For what is damnation? It is to be for ever ſeparated from, and deprived of, the fruition of God. Is this then, a dutiful object either of deſire or acquieſcence? It is to hate God and blaſpheme his name, as well as to be baniſhed from his preſence. Can this be tolerable to any true penitent? or is it reconcileable to, or conſiſtent with ſubjection to his righteous will? Can any creature be ſuppoſed to pleaſe God, by giving up all hope of his favour? Or is it leſs abſurd than " diſobeying" him from a ſenſe of " duty," and " hating" him from a principle of " love?"

We muſt, therefore, carefully ſeparate the acknowledgment of divine juſtice, and moſt unconditional ſubjection to the divine ſovereignty from an abſolute deſpair, or giving up all hope in the divine mercy. We have a very beautiful ſcripture inſtance of humble, yet perſiſting importunity, in the woman of Canaan, who met with many repulſes, confeſſed the juſtice of every thing that made againſt her, and yet continued to urge her plea. Neither is there any difference between the

* Iſa. lv. 2, 3.

way

way in which ſhe ſupplicated of the Saviour a cure for her diſtreſſed daughter, and the way in which an awakened ſinner will implore from the ſame Saviour more neceſſary relief to an afflicted conſcience. "And behold a woman of Canaan "came out of the ſame coaſt, and cried unto "him, ſaying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, "thou ſon of David, my daughter is greivouſly "vexed with a devil. But he anſwered her not "a word. And his diſciples came and beſought "him, ſaying, Send her away, for ſhe crieth "after us. But he anſwered and ſaid, I am not "ſent but unto the loſt ſheep of the houſe of If-"rael. Then came ſhe and worſhipped him, "ſaying, Lord help me. But he anſwered and "ſaid, It is not meet to take the children's bread "and caſt it to dogs. And ſhe ſaid, Truth, "Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which "fall from their maſter's table. Then Jeſus an-"ſwered and ſaid unto her, O woman, great is "thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt *." I ſhall conclude with mentioning an inſtance of a ſimilar character in a foreigner of eminent ſtation, who had been a great profligate, and afterwards became a great penitent †. He compoſed a little piece of poetry after his converſion, the leading ſentiment of which was what I have recommended above, and in his own language was

* Matt. xv. 22—28. † Des Barreaux.

to the following purpoſe: "Great God, thy "judgments are full of righteouſneſs, thou takeſt "pleaſure in the exerciſe of mercy; but I have "ſinned to ſuch a height, that juſtice demands "my deſtruction, and mercy itſelf ſeems to ſo-"licit my perdition. Diſdain my tears, ſtrike "the blow, and execute thy judgment. I am "willing to ſubmit, and adore, even in periſh-"ing, the equity of thy procedure. But on "what place will the ſtroke fall, that is not co-"vered with the blood of Chriſt?"

SECT. V.

Acceptance of ſalvation through the croſs of Chriſt.

THE next great ſtep in a ſinner's change is a diſcovery and acceptance of ſalvation from ſin and miſery through Jeſus Chriſt. This is the laſt and finiſhing ſtep of the glorious work. When this is attained, the change is compleated, the new nature is fully formed in all its parts. The ſpiritual ſeed is implanted, and hath taken root; and it will arrive by degrees, in every veſſel of mercy, to that meaſure of maturity and ſtrength, that it pleaſeth God each ſhall poſ-ſeſs before he be carried hence.

It is eaſy to ſee, that conviction of ſin which hath been before illuſtrated, prepares and paves the way for a diſcovery and acceptance of ſalva-tion

tion by Chriſt. Before conviction of ſin, or when conviction is but imperfect, the goſpel of Chriſt, and particularly the doctrine of the croſs, almoſt conſtantly appears to be fooliſhneſs. Or if, as ſometimes happens, education and example prompts the ſinner to ſpeak with ſome degree of reverence of the name, character, and undertaking of a Saviour, there is no diſtinct perception of the meaning, nor any inward reliſh of the ſweetneſs of theſe ſalutary truths. But thoſe who have been "wounded in their ſpirits, "and grieved in their minds," begin to perceive their unſpeakable importance and value. That myſtery which was hid from ages and generations, begins to open upon the ſoul in its luſtre and glory. The helpleſs and hopeleſs ſtate of the ſinner makes him earneſtly and anxiouſly enquire, whether there is any way to eſcape, whether there is any door of mercy or of hope. He ſays, with the awakened and trembling jailor, "What muſt I do to be ſaved? Innume-"rable evils have compaſſed me about, mine "iniquities have taken hold upon me, ſo that "I am not able to look up; they are more "than the hairs of mine head, therefore my "heart faileth me *. I have no excuſe to "offer, nor any ſhelter to fly to: the works, "the word, and the providence of God, ſeem all

* Pſal. xl. 12.

" to be up in arms againſt me, and have in-
" cloſed me as an enemy to him. O how fear-
" ful a thing is it to fall into the hands of the
" living God! Who ſhall dwell with devouring
" fire? Who ſhall dwell with everlaſting burn-
" ings? Is there no proſpect of relief? Is there
" no balm in Gilead? Is there no phyſician there?
" Wonderful has been my paſt blindneſs! I
" have awaked as out of a dream, and find
" myſelf haſting faſt to the pit of deſtruction.
" What would I not do, what would I not give,
" for good ground to believe that my guilt
" were taken away, and my peace made with
" God?"

With what eagerneſs and earneſtneſs, hitherto unknown, does the ſinner now enquire after the way to life? With what ſolicitude does he " go forth by the footſteps of the flock, and " feed beſide the ſhepherds tents." The ſab-baths, and ordinances, and word of God, are now quite different things from what they were before. No more waſte of that ſacred time in buſineſs or in play. No more ſerenity of heart, becauſe he had been regularly and conſtantly at church, but an aſtoniſhing view of the ſins of his holy things; careleſs, formal, heartleſs worſhip. He cries out with the Pſalmiſt, " Lord, " if thou ſhouldſt mark iniquity, who ſhall " ſtand." No more indifferent, ſlothful, diſ-

dainful

dainful hearing the word. No more critical hearing the word, that he may commend the ability or deride the weakneſs of the preacher. With what concern does he hang upon the ſacred meſſage, to ſee if there be any thing upon which he can lay hold? He then hears that "God is in Chriſt, reconciling the world to "himſelf." The very news of ſalvation, the bare mention of pardon, is now a joyful ſound. It rouſes his attention, it awakens his curioſity, and he ſets himſelf to weigh and ponder the important intimation. He hears that "God ſo "loved the world, that he gave his only begot-"ten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him "ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life. "For God ſent not his Son into the world "to condemn the world, but that the world "through him might be ſaved*. Is there "then," ſays he, "hope of mercy with God, "whom I have ſo long forgotten, and ſo greatly "offended? hath he indeed loved a guilty "world? hath he loved them in ſo amazing "a manner, as to ſend his only begotten Son "to ſave them from deſtruction? How great "is the giver, how wonderful the gift, and "how undeſerving the objects of his love?"

Here perhaps a difficulty may occur. "It may "be ſo," ſays the ſoul; "but are all the chil-

* John iii. 16, 17.

" dren of Adam the objects of divine love? Shall
" every ſinner be partaker of divine mercy?
" Surely not. How then are they diſtinguiſhed?
" Perhaps he intends only to ſave a few of
" the leaſt unworthy, and to glorify his juſ-
" tice and ſeverity in the condemnation of the
" moſt eminently guilty. What then have I
" reaſon to expect? None, none, none of any
" rank ſo criminal as I. I have ſinned early,
" and I have ſinned long. I have ſinned againſt
" the cleareſt light and knowledge. I have ſin-
" ned againſt innumerable mercies. I have ſin-
" ned againſt the threatnings of God's word,
" the rebukes of his providence, the checks of
" my own conſcience, and the unwearied pains
" and diligence of miniſters and parents. I have
" burſt every bond, and torn in pieces every
" reſtraining tie." How many gracious pro-
miſes preſent themſelves immediately to extin-
guiſh this fear? " Come now and let us rea-
" ſon together, ſaith the Lord; though your
" ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as
" ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they
" ſhall be as wool; if ye be willing and obe-
" dient, ye ſhall eat the good of the land *.
" Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe
" caſt out †. Wherefore alſo he is able to ſave
" them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by

* Iſ. i. 18, 19. † John vi. 37.

" him.

" him *. And the Spirit and the bride ſay " come; and let him that heareth ſay come; " and let him that is athirſt come; and whoſo- " ever will, let him take the water of life " freely †." To theſe promiſes may be added many ſcripture examples of firſt-rate ſinners, ſaved by the power of God, that none may deſpair. An idolatrous Manaſſeh, an unrighteous and oppreſſive publican Zaccheus, an unclean Mary Magdalene, and a perſecuting Paul. Then is the ſoul brought to acknowledge and adore the matchleſs love of God; to repeat and adopt the words of the apoſtle Paul; " This is a faithful " ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that " Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſin- " ners, of whom I am chief."

The ſinner in ſuch a ſituation, is wholly employed in alternately viewing his own deplorable character and ſtate on the one hand, and the ſufficiency and efficacy of the remedy on the other. As theſe take their turns in his mind, his hope riſes or falls. Perhaps when he again reflects on the infinite number, and heinous nature of his offences; when he conſiders the holineſs and purity of God's nature and law, he is ready to bring all into queſtion, and to ſay, " How can theſe things be? Is it poſſible that all this guilt can be paſſed by, is it poſſible that " it can be forgiven and forgotten by a holy

* Heb. vii. 25. † Rev. xxii. 17.

" God? Is he not of purer eyes than to behold " iniquity? Is it not ſaid, that evil cannot " dwell with him? That ſinners ſhall not ſtand " in his preſence? How then can I preſume " to approach him? I, who have been ſo daring " and obſtinate a rebel? What reception can I " expect to meet with but, Bind him hand " and foot, and take him away, and caſt him " into utter darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping " and gnaſhing of teeth *."

To remove this diſtruſt, and aſſure his heart before God, he is informed of the foundation of his hope, that ſalvation comes by a Mediator. He undertook our cauſe, he purchaſed redemption by his precious blood. Hear him ſay in the councils of the Moſt High, " Sacrifice and of- " fering thou didſt not deſire; mine ears haſt " thou opened. Burnt-offering and ſin-offering " haſt thou not required. Then ſaid I, Lo, I " come, in the volume of the book it is writ- " ten of me, I delight to do thy will, O my " God; yea, thy law is within my heart †." Hear alſo, in what manner he executed this gracious purpoſe. " He was wounded for our tranſ- " greſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities; " the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, " and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we " like ſheep have gone aſtray, we have turned

* Matt. xxii. 13. † Pſ. xl. 6, 7, 8,

" every

" every one to his own way, and the Lord hath " laid on him the iniquity of us all *." Let us alſo ſee how this matter is repreſented in the new teſtament. " Whom God hath ſet forth to be " a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to " declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of " ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of " God; to declare, I ſay, at this time his righte- " ouſneſs: that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier " of him that believeth in Jeſus †. For he hath " made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, " that we might be made the righteouſneſs of " God in him ‡."

It is through this man, and through his blood, that " repentance and remiſſion of ſins " is preached to all nations." Is not this a ſufficient and ſtable ground of hope? In the ſubſtitution of our ſurety, we ſee a way opened for the reception and reſtoration of ſinners, in a perfect conſiſtency with all the divine perfections. The ſpotleſs purity and holineſs, the ſtrict and impartial juſtice of God, ſeem to raiſe an inſuperable obſtacle to our admiſſion into his favour; but in the ſufferings and atonement of our Redeemer we ſee how he may teſtify his abhorrence of ſin, and puniſh it, and at the ſame time ſhew mercy to the ſinner. There is a perfect harmony of all the divine attributes in this deſign, and particularly a joint illuſtration of mercy and juſtice.

* Iſ. liii. 5, 6. † Rom. iii. 25, 26. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 21.

This is the goſpel of Chriſt, the bleſſed and reviving meſſage brought into the world by the prince of peace. This is "the record which "God hath given of his Son."

How welcome, how reviving this, to the diſcouraged, convinced ſinner? His very concern and fear, when proceeding upon other grounds, ariſes from a view of the infinite evil of ſin, ſo provoking to a holy God. But in this plan laid by divine wiſdom, he ſees the guilt of ſin ſufficiently expiated by a ſacrifice of infinite value. "For we are not redeemed with corruptible "things, ſuch as ſilver and gold—but with the "precious blood of Chriſt, as of a Lamb with-"out blemiſh and without ſpot *." He compares and contraſts, if I may ſo ſpeak, the greatneſs of his guilt with the price of his pardon. Then appears, with new and uncommon force, the greatneſs of this myſtery of godlineſs, GOD manifeſted in the fleſh. A victim no leſs conſiderable than the eternal and "only begotten" Son of God, "the brightneſs of his Father's glory, "and the expreſs image of his perſon." What is it that cannot be purchaſed by his marvellous exchange? The believer ſees with adoring wonder, the juſtice of God more awfully ſevere, in "awaking his ſword againſt the man who was "his fellow," than if the whole race of offending men had been irrecoverably loſt. At the

* 1 Pet. i. 18.

ſame

ſame time he ſees the unſpeakable dignity and majeſty of God, in his infinite and truly royal mercy, great in itſelf, and greater ſtill in the way in which it is diſpenſed. "Herein is love "indeed; not that we loved God, but that he "loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitia-"tion for our ſins *."

I cannot help here obſerving, that this ſalvation is ſo amazing, ſo wonderful in its nature, and ſo far removed from any thing we know among men, that we are in danger of being put to a ſtand, and can ſcarcely conceive it poſſible. But on the other hand, when we conſider that it carrieth not upon it any of the marks of human wiſdom, we are naturally led to ſay, "Salva-"tion belongeth unto God.—His ways are not "as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts." Therefore, when conviction of ſin makes us feel the neceſſity, and diſcovers the glory of our Saviour's atonement; we may both reſt aſſured of its truth, and triumph in its power. We may ſay with the apoſtle Paul, "Who ſhall lay any "thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God "that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? "It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen "again, who is even at the right hand of God, "who alſo maketh interceſſion for us †."

* 1 John iv. 10. † Rom. viii, 33, 34.

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But, "Pauſe a little, my ſoul," ſaith the convinced ſinner, "what tidings are here? What "ſaith the ſcripture, Who ſhall lay any thing "to the charge of God's elect? Unanſwerable "indeed! Happy, happy, thrice happy they, "who are the objects of God's everlaſting, diſ-"tinguiſhing and electing love. But how can I be "ſure that this includes, or rather doth not ex-"clude me? Can I ever hope to read my "name written in the Lamb's book of life?" No. But when you confeſs you cannot read any thing there in your favour, who hath authorized you to ſuppoſe any thing there to your prejudice? Secret things belong only to God. We are not permitted to ſearch, and we are not able to comprehend or explain the infinite depth of the divine councils. But do not things that are revealed belong to us? And how ſhall we preſume to ſet at variance the ſecret and the revealed will of God? Is not the commiſſion ſufficiently extenſive? "And he ſaid unto them, go ye "into all the world, and preach the goſpel "to every creature; he that believeth and is "baptized, ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth "not, ſhall be damned *" Is not the call unlimited and univerſal? "Come unto me, all ye "that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will "give you reſt †." "And Jeſus ſaid unto

* Mark xvi. 15, 16. † Matt. xi. 21.

"them,

"them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh "to me ſhall never hunger, and he that believeth "on me ſhall never thirſt *." "And in the "laſt day, that great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood "and cried, ſaying, If any man thirſt, let him "come unto me and drink †."

Can you then entertain any doubt of the call reaching to you, or queſtion your title to reſt upon this rock of ages? Behold, we preach unto you Chriſt crucified, a deſpiſed Saviour, indeed "to "the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks "fooliſhneſs;" but the "power of God, and "the wiſdom of God for ſalvation to every one "that believeth." There is no guilt ſo deep, but this precious blood will waſh it out. No gift ſo great, but infinite merit is ſufficient to procure it. No nature ſo polluted, but infinite power is ſufficient to renew it. Shall we then any more withold our approbation, or refuſe our conſent? Shall not every ſinner, burdened with a ſenſe of guilt or danger, intimate his compliance and urge his claim, and ſay, "Thanks, thanks "be to God for his unſpeakable gift.—It is ſal-"vation by the death of Chriſt, and therefore "becoming a holy and a jealous God, with "whom evil cannot dwell. It is the ſame un-"changeable God, who enacted the holy law, "and who publiſhes this glorious goſpel.—It

* John vi. 35. † John vii. 37.

"is

" is ſalvation by grace, otherwiſe no child of " Adam could have had any claim; and it is " meet that the lofty looks of man ſhould be " humbled, and the Lord alone exalted in that " day.—It is ſalvation to the chief of ſinners: I " am the man. I hear my character clearly de- " ſcribed in the word of God. I can read my " name in the general and gracious invitation. " I will accept of the offer, I will receive and " embrace this bleſſed Saviour as my Lord and " my God, as my life and my all."

Once more, perhaps the believer is ſtill ſtaggered, and his faith begins to fail. Aſtoniſhed at the greatneſs of the mercy, " he believeth " not for joy, and wondereth." He is ready to ſay, " Might I but hold faſt this beginning " of my confidence, I would not envy the " greateſt monarch on earth, his throne, his " purple, or his ſceptre, but would ſing the " new ſong put into my mouth, Unto him " that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins " in his own blood, and hath made us kings " and prieſts to God and his Father, to him " be glory and dominion for ever and ever. But " alas! are not all the promiſes of ſalvation only " in favour of them that believe? Here then " the concluſion may fail. I am ſenſible of a " lamentable weakneſs and backwardneſs of " mind; and whilſt I think I have no doubt of

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"any of the truths of God, I greatly diſtruſt the "reality of my own conſent and compliance "with his will." Do you then really give credit to all the truths of God reſpecting your own loſt condition, and the only way of deliverance from it? May the Lord himſelf increaſe your faith; for if it be ſo indeed, you are happy and ſafe. Theſe truths, theſe alone, are the ſure foundation of hope. I am afraid we have all too ſtrong a tendency to look for ſome encouraging qualification in ourſelves, on which we might more ſecurely reſt. What is faith? Is it any more than receiving the record which God hath given of his Son, believing the teſtimony of the amen, the true and faithful witneſs? Is not your peace and reconciliation with God, and the ſanctification of your natures, expreſsly provided for in the all-ſufficiency of Chriſt, and to him you are aſſured that you muſt be indebted for both? What ſtandeth in the way of your comfort then, but either that you do not give credit to the promiſe he hath made, or that you are not willing that he ſhould do it for you? and this I acknowledge is both unbelief and impenience.

Complain therefore no more, that you are afraid of yourſelves, whilſt yet you pretend to have the higheſt eſteem of the bleſſings of redemption; on the contrary, ſay unto God,

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in a thankful frame of ſpirit, " Glory to God in " the higheſt, on earth peace, and good-will to- " wards men. I praiſe thee for this meſſage of " peace. I think I ſee, in ſome meaſure, its " neceſſity, truth and beauty. I ſee it, I truſt " to ſuch a degree, that it is the ſole foundation " of my hope. I renounce every other claim; " nay, I abhor the thoughts of any other claim: " Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, " for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt " Jeſus my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the " loſs of all things, and do count them but dung " that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, " not having mine own righteouſneſs, which " is of the law, but that which is through the " faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of " God by faith *. It grieves me that there " is ſuch a backwardneſs in me to give glory to " thy name, and to be indebted to the riches of " thy grace. Subdue my obſtinacy, and rule " by thine own power. Lord, I believe, help " thou mine unbelief."

SECT. VI.

How the believer recovers peace of conſcience.

WE have now ſeen in what way the believer is reconciled to God, and delivered from condemnation. It will not be improper however

* Phil. iii, 8.

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alſo to conſider how he recovers peace of conſcience, and how his heart and life are governed in his after walk. This will ſerve more fully to illuſtrate the influence and operation of the truths of the goſpel. There is even a neceſſity of doing ſo on two different accounts: 1. That, as has been ſhewn above at conſiderable length, every true penitent is deeply and inwardly ſenſible of the evil of ſin in itſelf. He is not merely afraid of wrath, but ſees the impurity and pollution of his own heart. Suppoſing therefore, will the intelligent reader ſay, this great diſtinction thoroughly eſtabliſhed, his relief is but half accompliſhed? There may be no more condemnation for him in the law of God for the breach of which ſatisfaction had been made and accepted; but he is only ſo much the more liable to the condemnation of his own conſcience. He muſt ſtill ſuffer the reproaches and challenges of his own mind, which make ſo great a part of the miſery of a guilty ſtate.

This receives additional ſtrength, from a ſecond conſideration, that as he is juſtified by faith, he hath peace only through the blood of Chriſt. This is not from himſelf and may be thought to leave him, ſo to ſpeak, in point of ſtate and character, in point of pollution and defilement, juſt as before; nay, the extraordinary, unſolicited, undeſerved grace of God, may be thought to increaſe

creaſe his ſelf-condemnation, and ſet the malignity of his rebellion in the ſtrongeſt light. And indeed ſo far this is true, that the free grace of God was intended, and does ſerve to produce a growing humiliation of mind and ſelf-abaſement, as well as an admiration of the love of God in Chriſt Jeſus. As the tenderneſs of a parent is an image which God hath very frequently made uſe of, to ſhadow forth his own infinite compaſſion, I will borrow from it an illuſtration of the two remarks juſt now made. Suppoſe any child has offended a parent by a groſs inſtance of undutiful behaviour, for which he hath been ſeverely reproved, and for ſome time kept at a diſtance: if the parent forgives him, and receives him again into his favour, does not his being thus freed from the fear of ſuffering leave full room for his concern at the offence? And does not a ſenſe of his father's love melt his heart more for having grieved ſuch a parent, than any terror upon his mind for the puniſhment of the crime? He is immediately covered with confuſion; and if there be in him any ſpark of ingenuity, he is no ſooner forgiven of his father, than the tide of his affections returns back with full force, and he can hardly forgive himſelf.

But notwithſtanding this, as Chriſt by his ſufferings and death delivered us from the wrath to come, ſo by the ſhedding of his precious blood, the

the heart is alſo, as the ſcripture expreſſes it, ſprinkled from an evil conſcience. On this important ſubject, which leads us to the great principles of the ſpiritual life, the following particulars are recommended to the ſerious attention of the reader.

1. Through Jeſus Chriſt, and the whole of his undertaking as Mediator of the new covenant, the glory and honour of God is moſt admirably promoted, and perfect reparation made to his holy law which had been broken. This muſt needs be highly pleaſing to every convinced ſinner. As the juſtice of God is thereby ſatisfied, ſo conſcience, which is God's vicegerent, and as it were pleads his cauſe, is ſatisfied by the ſame means. The ground of a ſinner's diſſatisfaction with himſelf, is the diſhonour done to God. Muſt it not therefore pleaſe and ſatisfy him to ſee this diſhonour ſo perfectly removed, and ſo much of the divine glory ſhining in the work of redemption. All the divine perfections appear there with diſtinguiſhed luſtre; and muſt not this be highly refreſhing to the pardoned criminal? The very holineſs and juſtice of God, which before were terrible to him, are now amiable. He alſo contemplates and adores the divine wiſdom, as it is to be ſeen in the croſs of Chriſt. We are told, that even the celeſtial hoſts have new diſcoveries of the wiſdom of God in this great de-

ſign of providence, "To the intent that now "unto principalities and powers in heavenly "places, might be known by the church the ma-"nifold wiſdom of God *." How much more muſt the intereſted believer, with peculiar complacency, approve and adore it? But, above all, if that love and mercy which reigns through the whole is glorious to God, muſt it not be delightful to the Chriſtian? God is love; and his tender mercies are over all his other works; but creating and preſerving goodneſs are ſhaded and eclipſed by redeeming love. It is the theme of the praiſes of heaven, where Chriſt, as the object of worſhip, is repreſented as appearing "like a "Lamb that had been ſlain."

2. Believers have peace of conſcience through Chriſt, as their redemption through his blood, ſerves for their own humiliation and ſelf-abaſement, for the manifeſtation of the evil of ſin, and the vileneſs and unworthineſs of the ſinner. Nothing could be ſo well contrived as the doctrine of the croſs, in its purity and ſimplicity, to ſtain the pride of all human glory. We are particularly called to deny ourſelves, and to derive our worth and ſtrength from our Redeemer, in whom, "it hath pleaſed the Father, that all ful-"neſs ſhould dwell," and from whoſe fulneſs all his diſciples muſt "receive fulneſs, and grace for

* Eph. iii. 10.

"grace."

"grace." No hope of mercy but through him. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: "no man cometh unto the Father but by me *." "Neither is there ſalvation in any other: for "there is none other name under heaven given "among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved †." No acceſs to the throne of grace, or acceptance in worſhip, but through him: "In whom we "have acceſs with boldneſs and confidence, "through the faith of him ‡. And whatſoever "ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of "the Lord Jeſus, giving thanks to God and the "Father by him ‖." No hope of ſtability in duty, of uſefulneſs, or holineſs of converſation, but by the continued exerciſe of faith in him. "Abide "in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot "bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine, "no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am "the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in "me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much "fruit; for without me ye can do nothing §."

Hard ſayings and humbling doctrine indeed! But this is appeaſing to the conſcience; for as conſcience condemns us as guilty and undeſerving, this condemnation is ratified in every particular by the goſpel. Theſe very circumſtances in this doctrine, which provoke the hatred, or

* John xiv. 6. † Acts iv. 12. ‡ Eph. iii. 12.
‖ Col. iii. 17. § John xv. 4, 5.

invite the contempt of worldly men, do but ſo much the more endear it to the convinced ſoul; and he ſays from the heart, "It is highly juſt "and reaſonable that God alone ſhould be ex- "alted, and that he, through our Redeemer, "ſhould have the whole praiſe of our recovery "and ſalvation." Agreeably to this it will be found, that the apoſtles, in celebrating the grace of God, ſeldom omit an expreſs condemnation of themſelves, and a renunciation of all merit of their own, which indeed in every paſſage on this ſubject is manifeſtly implied: "For by grace ye "are ſaved, thro' faith; and that not of your- "ſelves, it is the gift of God: not of works, "leſt any man ſhould boaſt: for we are his work- "manſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good "works, which God hath before ordained that "we ſhould walk in them *.—Whereof I was "made a miniſter, according to the gift of the "grace of God given unto me, by the effectual "working of his power. Unto me, who am leſs "than the leaſt of all ſaints, is this grace given, "that I ſhould preach among the Gentiles the "unſearchable riches of Chriſt †."

3. Believers have peace from the challenges of an evil conſcience, through Chriſt, as they have an abſolute aſſurance of being delivered from the power of ſin, and effectually enabled to glorify

* Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10. † Eph. iii. 7, 8.

him

him with their ſouls and with their bodies, which are his. This muſt be the moſt earneſt deſire of every convinced ſinner. He breathes after deliverance from the bondage of ſin: the more he hath felt the weight of his chains, the more he longs to be free. This is inſeparable from genuine convictions, on the principles above laid down. How much muſt it contribute to compoſe the conſcience, to know that this deſire ſhall certainly be accompliſhed? However much cauſe he may have to condemn himſelf for his paſt provocations, or to dread the weakneſs of his own reſolutions of future amendment, he knows and truſts in the power of his Redeemer. He knows that henceforth he ſhall not ſerve ſin, that its dominion ſhall be gradually broken thro' life, and entirely deſtroyed at death. As the end of Chriſt's coming was to glorify his heavenly Father, he knows that the glory of God cannot be promoted by leaving the ſinner under the bondage of corruption, and therefore that he ſhall be purified, and made meet to be a "partaker of the inheritance of the ſaints in light."

If we look with care and attention into the New Teſtament, we ſhall perceive that there is a cloſe and mutual connection between our juſtification and ſanctification, and that both are repreſented as the fruit of our Redeemer's purchaſe: "There is therefore now no condemna-

" tion to thoſe that are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk " not after the fleſh but after the Spirit: for the law " of the Spirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made " me free from the law of ſin and death: for what " the law could not do, in that it was weak " through the fleſh, God ſending his own Son, " in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and for ſin con- " demned ſin in the fleſh *." All the bleſſings of ſalvation are repreſented as following one another in a continued chain or ſeries, not one link of which can poſſibly be broken: " For " whom he did foreknow, he alſo did predeſti- " nate to be conformed to the image of his Son, " that he might be the firſt-born among many " brethren. Moreover, whom he did predeſti- " nate, them he alſo called; and whom he call- " ed, them he alſo juſtified; and whom he juſ- " tified, them he alſo glorified †." There is a cleanſing and purifying virtue in the blood of Chriſt, as well as an infinite value in the way of purchaſe and atonement: " For if the blood of " bulls, and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer " ſprinkling the unclean, ſanctifieth to the pu- " rifying of the fleſh; how much more ſhall the " blood of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spi- " rit offered himſelf without ſpot to God, " purge your conſcience from dead works to " ſerve the living God ‡?"

* Rom. viii. 1, 2, 3 † Rom. viii. 29, 30. ‡ Heb. ix. 13, 14.

None

None but real Chriſtians, exerciſed in the ſpiritual life, know the value or neceſſity of the promiſes of ſtrength and aſſiſtance contained in the ſcriptures. The glory of their Redeemer's perſon, ſpoken of in ſo magnificent terms, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, is ſurveyed by them with the moſt exquiſite delight. The power and efficacy of his adminiſtration, is to them a ſource of unſpeakable comfort. Under him, as the Captain of their ſalvation, they "diſplay "their banners," and go forth with undaunted courage to meet every oppoſing enemy, believing that they ſhall be "more than conquerors thro' "him that loved them." Among many others, ſee the two following paſſages: "O Zion, that "bringeſt good tidings, get thee up into the "high mountain: O Jeruſalem, that bringeſt "good tidings, lift up thy voice with ſtrength: "lift it up, be not afraid: ſay unto the cities "of Judah, Behold your God. Behold, the Lord "God will come with a ſtrong hand, and his "arm ſhall rule for him: behold, his reward is "with him, and his work before him. He ſhall "feed his flock like a ſhepherd; he ſhall gather "the lambs with his arm, and carry them in "his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are "with young *.—Fear thou not, for I am with "thee: be not diſmayed, for I am thy God:

* Iſa. xl. 9, 10, 11.

"I will ſtrengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, "yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of "my righteouſneſs. Behold, all they that were "incenſed againſt thee, ſhall be aſhamed and "confounded: they ſhall be as nothing, and "they that ſtrive with thee, ſhall periſh. Thou "ſhalt ſeek them, and ſhalt not find them, even "them that contended with thee: they that "war againſt thee, ſhall be as nothing, and as "a thing of nought. For I the Lord thy God "will hold thy right-hand, ſaying unto thee, "Fear not, I will help thee *.

SECT. VII.

How the Chriſtian is governed in his daily converſation.

BEFORE concluding this chapter, I ſhall ſpeak a few words of the principles by which a believer is governed in his after obedience. On this the reader may obſerve, that a change in his whole character and conduct immediately and neceſſarily takes place. The love of God is "ſhed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghoſt," and is the commanding principle of all his future actions. It conſtantly diſcovers its influence, except in ſo far as it is reſiſted and counteracted by the remaining ſtruggles of that "law in his "members, which warreth againſt the law of

* Iſ. xli. 10, 11, 12, 13.

"God

"God in his mind." By the diſcovery which he hath obtained of the real nature and infinite amiableneſs of God, his will is renewed; he approves the things that are excellent, and gets ſuch an impreſſion of the obligation of the law of God, as cannot be afterwards effaced. So long however as he continues under a load of unforgiven guilt, and ſees every perfection of God armed with terror againſt himſelf, there can be little elſe than ſlaviſh fear: but when he hears a gracious promiſe of pardon; when on examining the evidence his doubt and uncertainty is removed; when he ſees the righteous ground on which this forgiveneſs is built, he lays hold of it as his own, and is united to God by unfeigned love. This love, though weak in its meaſure, is, notwithſtanding, perfect in its nature, and therefore powerful in its influence; being at once a love of eſteem, of gratitude, and of deſire.

The love of God is the firſt precept of the moral law, and the firſt duty of every intelligent creature; but it is eaſy to ſee that unleſs our love is fixed upon the true God, it is ſpurious and unprofitable: and unleſs the true God is ſeen in "the face of Jeſus Chriſt," for any ſinner to love him is impoſſible: but through the glorious goſpel, the new nature is effectually produced, and cannot be produced in any other way. It

is Chriſt Jeſus who reveals to us the true God, the knowledge of whom we had loſt. "No "man hath ſeen God at any time; the only "begotten Son, which is in the boſom of the "Father, he hath declared him *." It is he who makes our peace with God, whom we had offended by our tranſgreſſions; for "being juſt-"fied by faith, we have peace with God through "our Lord Jeſus Chriſt †." And it is he who reconcileth our minds to God, by diſcovering his mercy to us; ſo that he might well ſay of himſelf, "I am the way, and the truth, and the "life; no man cometh unto the Father but by "me ‡."

I might eaſily ſhew, that the love of God is the ſource, the ſum, and the perfection of holineſs. All other duties naturally flow from it; nay, all other duties are nothing elſe but the neceſſary expreſſions of it. But inſtead of entering into a particular detail, ſuffer me only to obſerve theſe two things; Firſt, That a believer is under the conſtant influence of gratitude to God; and, ſecondly, That this includes in it, and will certainly produce, the moſt ſincere and fervent love to all his fellow-creatures.

1. A believer is under the conſtant influence of gratitude to God, and that not of a common kind. It is not merely thankfulneſs to a bounti-

* John i. 18. † Rom. v. 1. ‡ John xiv. 6.

ful

ful and liberal benefactor, for mercies which have not been deſerved, but a deep ſenſe of obligation to a Saviour, who loved him, and waſhed him in his own blood from the guilt he had contracted; who ſaved him by his own death from the dreadful penalty which he had incurred. What the influence of this muſt be, we may gather from the words of the apoſtle Paul, "For "the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we "thus judge, That if one died for all, then were "all dead; and that he died for all, that they "which live ſhould not henceforth live unto "themſelves, but unto him which died for them, "and roſe again."

I cannot immediately drop this ſubject, but intreat the reader to obſerve how deeply a ſenſe of redeeming love muſt be engraven on the heart of every believer. On how many circumſtances will he expatiate, which ſerve to magnify the grace of God, and point out the force of his own obligations? The infinite greatneſs and glory of God, independent and all-ſufficient, that he ſhould have compaſſion on the guilty ſinner, and ſay, "Deliver him from going down "into the pit; I have found a ranſom." O, how piercing thoſe rays of love, which could reach from the Godhead to man; To this he will never fail to add his own unworthineſs his numerous, aggravated, repeated provocations. He never loſes ſight of thoſe ſins which firſt com-

pelled him to fly for refuge "to the hope ſet be-
"fore him." His own intereſt obliged him to remember them before, as expoſing him to condemnation, and he is now willing to confeſs and record them, as ſerving to illuſtrate the divine mercy.

And let us never forget the unſpeakable gift of God, "That he ſpared not his own Son, but "delivered him up for us all." How ſhall we ſufficiently wonder at the boundleſs mercy of the Father and the infinite condeſcenſion of the Son, when we reflect upon his incarnation, and on the aſtoniſhing end of his appearance in our nature, that he might "bear our ſins in his "own body on the tree." Did he overcome all his enemies in his laſt conflict, and "make a "ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them "in his croſs?" And ſhall he not alſo, by the ſame means, reign in his people's hearts, and be the ſovereign Lord of all their affections?

To all this, I ſhall only add that glorious inheritance, which is provided for every "veſſel of "mercy," after he hath paſſed his preparatory trials. How well may we join with the apoſtle Peter in this ſolemn form of thankſgiving, "Bleſ-
"ſed be the God and father of our Lord Jeſus "Chriſt, who, according to his abundant "mercy, hath begotten us again by the reſur-
"rection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead, to an

"inheritance incorrupted and undefiled, and "that fadeth not away *." Now, when all theſe circumſtances are conſidered by the believer, together with ſuch as may be peculiar to himſelf and his own paſt conduct, muſt he not be ready to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to "do! O that I knew how I might repay ſome "ſmall part of my infinite obligations! O that "I knew by what means, or at what expence I "might magnify and do thee honour! Write "thy laws in my heart, and put them in my "inward parts, and enable me in every poſſible "way to ſhew that I love thee, becauſe thou "haſt firſt loved me."

2. This plainly includes in it, and will certainly produce the moſt ſincere and fervent love to his fellow-creatures. As love to God is the firſt, ſo love to man is the ſecond commandment of the moral law. We have our Lord's own authority for ſaying it is "like" unto the firſt; and that love which "worketh no ill to his neigh-"bours," is the "fulfilling of the law." Every one is ready to acknowledge, that love to man is an important branch of practical religion. But many great pleaders for this duty do not ſufficiently attend to its inſeparable connection with the love of God, and in particular with a ſenſe of redeeming love, or the love of God in Chriſt:

* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

Yet is there no ſuch principle of univerſal love any where to be found.

In order to take a ſhort view of this, it will be proper to diſtinguiſh our brethren of mankind into the two general claſſes of bad men and good. As to bad men, the ſame love to God, the ſame concern for his glory, which fills the Chriſtian with grief and indignation at their moſt daring offences, inſpires the moſt ardent deſire for their recovery and ſalvation. This is the only love to them, which is either acceptable to God or profitable to themſelves. It will ſhew itſelf in all the offices of kindneſs and humanity; in inſtructing them where there is ability, admoniſhing them where there is opportunity, and in pleading for them at the throne of grace, to which there is always undiſturbed acceſs. The believer, knowing the danger of ſin, and having a proſpect of approaching eternity, is moved with compaſſion for blind and inconſiderate ſinners. Their conduct leads him to reflect upon the depravity of his own nature and earneſtly to pray that they may be partakers of divine grace.

He that loveth God is under little temptation to hate his brother? or rather, in ſo far as he loveth God ſincerely, he is under none at all. Hatred commonly ariſeth from envy and rival purſuits. But a Chriſtian, more than ſatisfied with his own por-

portion, hath no occaſion to envy others, either what they poſſeſs or proſecute. In what a contemptible light does he look upon the honours, riches and pleaſures, about which there is ſo violent a ſtruggle among worldly men? It is impoſſible, therefore, that he ſhould hate thoſe who do not interfere with him, though in many caſes he is diſpoſed heartily to pity their folly and deluſion.

Nay, the matter does not even reſt here, for the Chriſtian is laid under the moſt expreſs command to "love his" perſonal "enemies, to "bleſs them that curſe him, to pray for them "who deſpitefully uſe him and perſecute him." This is the glory of the goſpel, which gives the doctrine of Chriſt a luſtre far ſuperior to the moſt admired ſyſtems of human virtue. And however hard a ſaying it may appear at firſt view, when we conſider the character and hopes of a penitent ſinner, and the example of his expiring Saviour, it hath nothing ſtrange or incredible in it at all: That he, who expects from the free grace of God pardon for his innumerable and aggravated offences, ſhould be ready to forgive the far ſlighter treſpaſſes of his brethren againſt himſelf. Or rather, that he ſhould take the higheſt pleaſure, and think it an honour to do ſo, when he remembers his Redeemer's dying words,

words, "Father, forgive them, for they know "not what they do."

As to good men, there is no manner of difficulty: they are united together by the tendereſt and the ſtrongeſt ties, and love one another with a pure heart fervently. It was no wonder, that when Chriſtianity was in a perſecuted ſtate, the heathens ſhould make the remark, "Be- "hold how theſe Chriſtians love one another!" They had a common character, a common Saviour, common ſufferings, and common hopes. And muſt it not be the ſame ſtill? for "all that "will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer per- "ſecution." If they are not perſecuted with the ſwords, they ſhall be perſecuted with the tongues of men. They have the ſtrongeſt motives to love one another, and nothing to divide them, for there can be no rivalſhip or jealouſy between thoſe who poſſeſs or court the "true "riches." There is enough in an all-ſufficient God to ſatisfy the deſires of all his ſaints; and they being intimately united to the one only living and true God, muſt of conſequence be united to one another. This is the tenour of their Saviour's interceſſory prayer: "That they "all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, "and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in "us: that the world may believe that thou haſt "ſent me. And the glory which thou gaveſt

"me,

"me, I have given them: that they may be one,
"even as we are one. I in them, and thou in
"me, that they may be made perfect in one,
"and that the world may know that thou haſt
"ſent me, and haſt loved them as thou haſt
"loved me *."

CONCLUSION.

I Shall now cloſe this diſcourſe with ſome practical improvement of theſe important truths. Several reflections have indeed already been interwoven with the particular branches of the ſubject, and the light which they throw on other parts of religion pointed out. I ſhall therefore at this time only make a few obſervations upon the whole, and proceed to a ſerious addreſs to all my readers on this moſt intereſting ſubject. And,

1ſt, From the various truths above eſtabliſhed, and the order in which they have been opened, we may ſee the indiſſoluble connection between ſalvation by the Grace of God, and holineſs in heart and converſation. We may ſee their equal importance and their influence upon one another. There are many who attempt to divide thoſe things which God hath inſeparably joined. Many inſiſt only on the duties of the law of God, and our natural obligations to obedience; and are

* John xvii. 21, 22, 23.

hardly

hardly brought to any mention of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as the ground of a ſinner's acceptance before God. Nay, ſome ſcruple not to affirm, that the doctrine of juſtification by free grace, or a ſinner's being found in Chriſt, not having his own righteouſneſs, weakens the obligation to holineſs, and tends to introduce licentiouſneſs of practice. But from what hath been ſaid in the above diſcourſe, we may learn, not only in general the abſolute neceſſity of a change, but how this ſtands connected with the purchaſe and gift of ſalvation, the character and work of a Redeemer. It will plainly appear, that a change in ſome reſpects is neceſſary to bring us to, and in others is the neceſſary effect and conſequence of, the acceptance of ſalvation.

I have endeavoured in the preceding pages to ſhew, that a diſcovery of the nature and glory of God, and of the infinite evil of ſin, is abſolutely neceſſary, in order to our either underſtanding or reliſhing the doctrine of the croſs. What is this then, but a change begun? Muſt not the dominion of ſin in every ſuch perſon have received a mortal blow? Doth any thing more directly tend to holineſs, than to ſee the power and glory of a holy God, and how "evil "and bitter a thing" it is to depart from him? On the other hand, is it not neceſſary to complete the change, that there be a ſenſe of reconciliation

ciliation and peace? "Can two walk together "except they be agreed?" Can any perſon live in the love and ſervice of God, while he conceives him to be his enemy, and ſuppoſes himſelf ſtill the object of his wrath and diſpleaſure? But ſuppoſing this reconciliation obtained, let me boldly aſk, What motive to holineſs in all manner of converſation, equal to the force of redeeming love? Judge, O Chriſtian, will any cold reaſoning on the nature and beauty of virtue have ſuch an effect in mortifying corruptions, as a believing view of a pierced Saviour? Where ſhall we find ſo faithful, ſo active, ſo chearful a ſervant of God, as one who joins with the apoſtle Paul in ſaying, "I am crucified with Chriſt: "nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liv- "eth in me: and the life which I now live in "the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of "God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for "me *." Faith in Chriſt Jeſus never can take place in any heart, unleſs there has been an internal work of the Spirit of God teſtifying of him; and there is no effectual principle of new obedience, but faith which worketh by love.

2. What has been ſaid above, will ſerve to explain ſome controverſies with which the truths of the goſpel have been often darkened and perplexed; particularly thoſe relating to the priority,

* Gal. ii. 20.

or

or right of precedency, ſo to ſpeak between faith and repentance. Some make repentance, that is, as they explain it, ſorrow for ſin, ſerious reſolutions of forſaking it, and begun reformation, the joint grounds of our acceptance with the merit of a Saviour. Theſe, with great plauſibility, ſtate the matter thus: That our ſincerity is accepted through the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, inſtead of that perfect obedience to which we cannot now attain; and, when taken in a certain light, this aſſertion is undoubtedly true. Others, diſcerning the falſhood that may lurk under this repreſentation, and fearing the conſequences of every ſelf-righteous plan, are tempted to go to the oppoſite extreme. That they might ſhew ſalvation to be wholly of grace, ſome have even preſumed to uſe this harſh and unſcriptural expreſſion, that it is not neceſſary to forſake ſin in order to come to Chriſt. I could ſhew a ſenſe in which this alſo is true, even as it is not neceſſary to forſake your diſeaſe in order to apply to the phyſician. But if it is not neceſſary to forſake it, I am ſure it is neceſſary, in both caſes, to hate it, and deſire deliverance from it.

This difficulty will be eaſily ſolved from what has been ſaid in the preceding parts of this treatiſe, and we may learn to preſerve the truth, without expoſing it to the ſcorn or reſentment of its enemies. The reader may obſerve, then, that none

none can ſee the form or comelineſs of a Saviour ſtanding in the room of ſinners, and purchaſing forgiveneſs from a holy God, till the glory of this God is diſcovered, till the guilt of ſin lays hold of the conſcience, and its power is both felt and lamented. This may, perhaps, be called repentance, and I believe it is called ſo ſometimes in the holy ſcriptures, particularly in the following paſſage: "Repent ye therefore, and be con-"verted, that your ſins may be blotted out, when "the times of refreſhing ſhall come from the pre-"ſence of the Lord*." But the ſinner does not ſo properly forſake ſin in order to come to Chriſt, as he flies to him for deliverance from its condemning guilt and enſlaving power. He is ſo far from coming to God with a gift in his hand, even of his own prayers and penitential tears, that his convictions continue to follow him, if I may ſpeak ſo, through every lurking place, till he is entirely ſubjected, till he is ſtript naked and bare, and deprived of every ſhadow of excuſe. Then it is that ſalvation through a deſpiſed crucified Saviour becomes unſpeakably amiable in all its parts, ſin becomes more perfectly hateful, and an aſſured proſpect is obtained of its immediate mortification, and, in due time, of its entire and complete deſtruction. Thus faith and repentance are involved in one another, they produce,

* Acts iii. 19.

and

and are produced by one another. They may be treated of diſtinctly, but they cannot exiſt ſeparately. So that whenever any of them is found alone, or ſtands independent of the other, that very thing is a ſufficient evidence that it is falſe and ſpurious.

3. From what has been ſaid on this ſubject, we may be enabled to judge what are the fundamental and eſſential doctrines of the goſpel, to which all others are but ſubordinate and ſubſervient. Regeneration, or the New Birth, we are warranted to ſay, after the example of our Saviour, is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation: "Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God." If any man, therefore, depart from this truth, he makes ſhipwreck of the faith, and will at laſt be found to fight againſt God. It is alſo plain, that the reconciliation of a ſinner to God muſt be through the blood of the atonement: "For other foundation can no man "lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt *." If any man hold by, and build upon, this great foundation, he ſhall be finally accepted, though many things may be found in him juſtly blameworthy. Nor is it eaſy, indeed, to ſay what degree of error and miſapprehenſion concerning theſe truths themſelves, may be conſiſtent with abiding by the ſubſtance. But certainly all who

* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

directly

directly and openly oppoſe them, may be ſaid "to "bring in damnable hereſies, even denying the "Lord that bought them, and to bring upon "themſelves ſwift deſtruction †."

This may teach us, what judgment Chriſtians ought to form of the many parties and factions which divide the viſible church. There may be ſmaller differences, which keep them aſunder on earth, while, in faith and in love to an unſeen Saviour, they are perfectly united. We are told that God ſhall gather his elect from the four winds, and that "many ſhall come from the eaſt "and weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, "and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of hea-"ven *." I always think with much pleaſure on the perfect union of this great and general aſſembly of the church of the firſt-born. Then all other diſtinctions, all other deſignations ſhall be aboliſhed, and thoſe ſhall make one pure and unmixed ſociety, who have received "a white ſtone "and a new name," and "whoſe names are "written in the Lamb's book of life." The proſpect of this ſhould keep us from immoderate reſentment, at preſent, againſt any of whom we have reaſon to think that they hold the foundation, are acquainted with real and practical religion, or have had experience of a ſaving change.

† 2. Pet. ii. 1. * Matt. viii. 11.

No

No man, indeed, can deny it to be juſt, that every one would endeavour to ſupport that plan of the diſcipline and government of the church of Chriſt, and even the minuteſt parts of it, which appear to him to be founded upon the word of God. But ſtill ſound doctrine is more to be eſteemed than any form. Still we ought to conſider the excellence of every particular form, as conſiſting in its fitneſs to promote or preſerve the knowledge of the truth, and to carry on a work of illumination, conviction, and converſion, to the ſaving of the ſoul. Would any Chriſtian ſhew that he is of a truly catholic diſpoſition, let him diſcover a greater attachment to thoſe even of different denominations, who ſeem to bear the image of God, than to prophane perſons, be their apparent or pretended principles what they will. Let us pay ſome regard to other diſtinctions, but ſtill the greateſt regard to the moſt important of all diſtinctions, that of ſaints and ſinners.

4. As this great diſtinction divides the whole human race, and is ſo very important in its conſequences, let me earneſtly intreat every one who peruſeth this treatiſe, to bring the matter to a trial with regard to himſelf. Anſwer this queſtion in ſerioufneſs, Whether do you belong to the one claſs or the other? We are dropping into the grave from day to day, and our ſtate is fixed beyond any poſſibility of change. What aſtoniſhing

ing folly to continue in uncertainty whether we ſhall go to heaven or hell, whether we ſhall be companions of angels, or aſſociates with blaſpheming devils, to all eternity. Nothing, therefore, can be more ſalutary, than that you make an impartial ſearch into your preſent character and ſtate. If you have ground to conclude that you are at peace with God, what an unſpeakable ſource of joy and conſolation? If otherwiſe, there is no time to loſe in haſtening from the brink of the pit. May I not with ſome confidence make this demand of every reader, that he would ſet apart ſome time, and apply with vigour and earneſtneſs to the duty of ſelf-examination. Is not this demand reaſonable? What injury can you ſuffer by complying with it? Will conſcience permit any to continue unreproved in the neglect of it? Have you read ſo much on the ſubject of regeneration, and are you unwilling to reap the benefit of it? Let every one, without exception, take up or renew this grand enquiry, "Am I in "Chriſt? That is, am I a New Creature or not? "Am I a child of God? or do I ſtill continue "an heir of hell?"

5. As it is more than probable there will be ſome readers who are, or have reaſon to ſuſpect, themſelves unrenewed, I would now come as an ambaſſador from Chriſt, and endeavour to negotiate peace. Wherefore "as though God did

"beſeech

"beſeech you by me, I pray you in Chriſt's ſtead "be ye reconciled unto God *." While I attempt this, I deſire to do it under a juſt impreſſion of the great and principal truths which have been illuſtrated on this ſubject. I know that this change is a work of the Holy Spirit of grace; that he only can bring a clean thing out of an unclean; that without his effectual bleſſing, the cleareſt and moſt concluſive reaſoning directed to the underſtanding, the moſt warm and pathetic application to the affections, will be altogether fruitleſs. I know that great natural abilities are often perverted and abuſed, that the ſoundeſt reaſon in worldly things, and the moſt brutiſh folly in matters of eternity, are often joined together, That men may be learned ſcholars, eminent politicians, active merchants, ſkilful tradeſmen, and yet blinded ſinners, whom no inſtruction can enlighten, whom no warning can alarm. But I know and believe, at the ſame time, that God, "whom I ſerve with my ſpirit in the goſpel of "his Son," is able to make "his word quick "and powerful, ſharper than a two-edged ſword, "piercing even to the dividing aſſunder of ſoul "and ſpirit, and of the joints and marrow, and "a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the "heart †." There is an expreſs appointment that the wicked ſhall "receive warning," and in

* 2. Cor. v. 10. † Heb. iv. 12.

this

this way alone the watchman can "deliver his "own ſoul." It is alſo agreeable to reflect, that when God giveth "a door of utterance," he is alſo often pleaſed to give "a door of faith," which I pray may be the caſe with many who read this diſcourſe, for Chriſt's ſake.

Let me, therefore, repeat in your ears this truth, and may God Almighty by his Spirit carry it to your hearts, that "except a man be born "again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of "God." Every child of Adam, by nature, is at enmity with God, and muſt either be renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, or periſh eternally. It is of no conſequence what you are as to outward ſtation, if you are not reconciled to God; it is of no conſequence what you are as to outward profeſſions, if you are not inwardly changed, God is no reſpecter of perſons, and, therefore, whether you are high or low, rich or poor, whether you are of one denomination of Chriſtians or another, if you have not been the ſubjects of a renewing and ſanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, you are children of wrath, and, if you die in that condition, muſt "go away into everlaſting "puniſhment." To reflect ſeriouſly but for a few moments on this truth, and that every one of us is ſo deeply concerned in it, one would think might be ſufficient to alarm us all, either for ourſelves or for others, or for both. Who

could imagine that this weak fleſh, ſo frail in its nature, and ſo eaſily taken to pieces, ſhould yet ſo harden us againſt the impreſſion of approaching eternity.—But is there any hope of relief? Yes there is, and that as univerſal as the danger. The commiſſion is unlimited, "Go ye into all "the world, and preach the GOSPEL to every "CREATURE*."

In order to make this exhortation the more diſtinct and effectual, I ſhall endeavour to addreſs it in a particular and ſeparate manner to the following claſſes: The Rich and the Poor; the Young and the Old; the Self-righteous and the Chief of Sinners.

I would preach the everlaſting goſpel to the Rich and Affluent, on whom (as the world chooſes to expreſs it) fortune ſmiles, who are well and plentifully ſupplied with every preſent conveniency. The prophet Jeremiah, in trying the ſucceſs of his meſſage, ſays, "I will get me un-"to the great men, and will ſpeak unto them†." It is, indeed, a matter of no ſmall difficulty often to perſuade ſuch to hear the truths of the goſpel. Let them not be offended while I mention the words of our bleſſed Saviour, "Verily I ſay un-"to you, that a rich man ſhall hardly enter "into the kingdom of heaven." And again, "I ſay unto you, it is eaſier for a camel to go

* Mark xvi. 15. † Jer. v. 5.

"through

"through the eye of a needle, than for a rich "man to enter into the kingdom of God *." When the world is pleaſant and inviting, it is ready to ingroſs our attention, to poſſeſs our eſteem, and to attract our homage. Worldly grandeur is very ready to inſpire the mind with pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, which is, of all other things, the moſt deſtructive of real religion, and which is particularly oppoſite to the humbling and ſelf-abaſing doctrine of ſalvation by grace. The great and faſhionable world is ſtill in danger of the offence of the croſs. Denying themſelves, bearing profane ſcorn, mortifying the fleſh, loving and following a crucified maſter, are hard leſſons, indeed, to men of wealth and affluence.

But ſuffer me to warn all ſuch, not to "truſt "in uncertain riches." Place not your happineſs in ſo unſtable a poſſeſſion. How ſtrong, as well as how juſt, the wiſe man's expreſſions! "Wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that which is "not: for riches certainly make themſelves "wings, they fly away as an eagle towards hea-"ven †." Behold, I preach the goſpel to you, and offer you the true riches. However pride may make you fondly flatter yourſelves, however your greatneſs or wealth may deter others from treating you with plainneſs and ſincerity, you are ſinners of the race of Adam, you are loſt in him

* Matt. xix. 23, 24. † Prov. xxii. 5.

by nature you are tranſgreſſors in practice, and liable to divine wrath, from which there is no ſhelter but in the blood of Chriſt. It is but a very little time that your worldly greatneſs can endure, Death ſhall write vanity on all created glory; and nothing elſe ſhall ſcreen you from the wrath of the Almighty Judge in the laſt and great day. There the rich and the poor, the priſoner and the oppreſſor, ſhall ſtand upon a level before the Maker of them all. Embrace then, while you may, the mercy of God. Put on the ſpotleſs robe of your Redeemer's righteouſneſs, and value it more than purple and fine linnen, or the moſt coſtly attire. Seek the bread of life which came down from heaven, and value it more highly than the moſt ſumptuous and delicate fare. Be not aſhamed of a crucified Saviour. Endure with a noble firmneſs the diſdainful ſmiles of a ſcoffing word. O! how amiable is the union of high ſtation and piety, honour and humility, wealth and ſelf-denial, with a reſolute profeſſion of the goſpel! Bleſſed is the memory of Joſeph of Arimathea, an honourable man, and a counſellor, who boldly begged, and honourably interred the body of our Lord, after it had been crucified at the inſtigation of corrupt prieſts, and pierced by the inhumanity of brutal ſoldiers. May the Lord God of nature bleſs and increaſe your ſubſtance, and make every thing you do to proſper, but in his mercy deliver you from

from deſpiſing the goſpel, dying impenitent, and lifting up your eyes in torments.

2. Let me preach this goſpel to the Poor. It was the glory of the goſpel that it was preached to the Poor, and given by our Saviour himſelf as one of the marks of the Meſſiah's arrival, that "the goſpel was preached to the poor." Very able was this to their ſtate, good news were brought to them in their diſtreſs. But think not, my brethren, that your being poor is enough of itſelf. It may, indeed, preſerve you from many temptations to which the rich are expoſed, and it ought, one would think, to conſtrain you to ſeek to be rich towards God. But, alas! this is not always the caſe, and, when it is otherwiſe, how does it make every conſiderate heart bleed with compaſſion and tenderneſs! Oh! unhappy they who are both poor and profane, miſerable in time, and miſerable to eternity, deſpiſed on earth, and outcaſts for ever. Pitiable caſe indeed!

But does not the Saviour of ſinners beſeech you to be reconciled unto God. He intreats you to come unto him that you may have life. He regardeth not the perſons of men, but values a precious immortal ſpirit as much in a mean cottage as in a ſplendid palace. Your rags and nakedneſs can be no hindrance to your obtaining his favour. He counſels you to "buy of him

" gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich;
" and white raiment, that you may be clothed."
But O! conſider that you are naturally much more lothſome by ſin than by poverty. Humble yourſelves deeply in the ſight of God. Fly for refuge to lay hold of the hope ſet before you. Accept of a free pardon of all your ſins through the blood of Chriſt, and of his Holy Spirit to enable you to love and ſerve him. Rejoice in your portion as all-ſufficient and full, and in the covenant of peace, as " ordered in all things, and ſure." Go in the ſpirit of adoption to your reconciled Father in Chriſt, and aſk of him of your daily bread. Do not envy the proſperity of others; ſince it is not material whether you ſhall live in plenty and ſleep on a bed of down, or live in ſtraits and lie on a dunghill, compared to what ſhall become of you for ever. But, above all, be not ſo mad as to envy ſinners an unſanctified proſperity. Rather, when you ſee a man of opulence deſpiſing the ſabbath, or hear a wretch in a gilded chariot profaning his Creator's name, be ready to ſay, " Shall I complain of poverty, when
" my Lord and maſter had not where to lay his
" head? No, let me, on the contrary, bleſs that
" adverſity which cauſed me to conſider. Let
" me be very thankful for that humble ſtation
" which gives me acceſs to communion with
" God, and does not waſte my time with crouds
" of

" of company. Who knoweth whether I ſhould " have retained my integrity, if I had been con- " ſtantly ſurrounded with profane gaiety, ſwim- " ming in pleaſure, beſieged by flatterers, ſo- " licited by ſenſualiſts, beſet with temptations? " O that I may be poſſeſſed of the pearl of great " price, reconciled to God, united to Chriſt, " adorned with divine grace, and that I may be " my Redeemer's at his ſecond coming."

3. I would preach the goſpel to thoſe who are but yet in the Morning of life. This is the moſt pleaſant and hopeful part of a miniſter's work. Happy are you, my dear Children, who have been ſo early called into God's vineyard, but infinitely more happy, if you are inwardly and fully determined to comply with the call. I beſeech you " Remember your Creator in the days of your " youth, while the evil days come not, nor the " years draw nigh, when you ſhall ſay you have " no pleaſure in them *." Early piety is exceeding lovely in the eyes of the ſober part of mankind, highly acceptable to God, and will be infinitely profitable to yourſelves. Be not enticed with the deceitful promiſes and falſe pretences of worldly enjoyments, which are ſo ready to inflame your paſſions, and ſo warmly ſolicit your love. Believe the teſtimony of all, without exception, who have gone before you, and have

* Eccleſ. xii. 1.

left this record written on created comforts, that they are "vanity and vexation of ſpirit." Believe it, you have entered on a world of ſin and ſorrow. You may feel the early ſtirrings of corruption in yourſelves, and ſee its manifeſt and manifold fruits, both in yourſelves and others. Alas? Are there not ſome young perſons who learn, as their firſt language, to blaſpheme their Maker's name? Many children who cannot work, are expert in ſinning. Alas! your hearts are naturally far from God. You "go aſtray "as ſoon as you are born, ſpeaking lies."

Be perſuaded, therefore, to fly to the blood of Chriſt, the precious blood of Chriſt, "who "loved you, and gave himſelf for you." He died upon the croſs to ſave you from the hell which you have deſerved by your ſins; and he graciouſly invites you, ſaying, "Suffer the little "children to come unto me, and forbid them not, "for of ſuch is the kingdom of God *." Bleſſed are thoſe children, who, like their Saviour, advance in wiſdom as in ſtature, and "in fa-"vour with God and man." Let young perſons in general remember, as they are growing up, that all the early opportunities of inſtruction which they have enjoyed, eſpecially ſuch as have been brought up under the inſpection of pious parents, will greatly aggravate their guilt,

* Mark x. 14.

if

if they continue to deſpiſe them. For this reaſon ſome, I wiſh I could not ſay many, are old in ſin, when they are but young in years. Wherefore, without further delay, betake yourſelves to God in Chriſt; learn and love vour Redeemer's name, and let the life that you live in the fleſh, be a life of faith on the Son of God and only Saviour of the world. Your early entrance on a religious life will make you regular, eſtabliſhed, uſeful, fruitful Chriſtians. If you are to continue long in the world, it will greatly contribute to the ſweetneſs and ſerenity of life; and if it be the will of God that you ſhould die ſoon, it will make you meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light. There is ſomething very terrible in the death (often the unexpected death) of young perſons, in the bloom or middle of life, plunged in ſenſuality, inflamed with luſt, and bent on ſin of every kind. But, bleſſed be God, there are alſo ſome agreeable inſtances of young ſaints quickly ripened by divine grace, thoroughly mellowed by early affliction, reſigning the world, not with ſubmiſſion only, but pleaſure, and taking wing to a land of reſt and peace, where "the inhabitants ſhall not ſay, I "am ſick;" and "the people that dwell therein "ſhall be forgiven their iniquity *."

* Iſ. xxxiii. 24.

4. I muſt now preach the goſpel to thoſe who are old, who having gone through many viciſſitudes, are perhaps tottering upon the brink of the grave, and drawing near to "the houſe "appointed for all living." And I do it, becauſe my office obliges me to preach the goſpel to every creature. There is but little pleaſure in addreſſing ſuch, becauſe there is but little hope of ſucceſs. May I not ſuppoſe, that ſome one, or more, may be led to peruſe this diſcourſe, who have many years reſiſted the calls of the goſpel, and have been long accuſtomed to do evil. What cauſe have you to admire the mercy of God, that you are not now "in the lake "which burns with fire and brimſtone for ever-"more?" Have you not followed many of your equals in age to the church-yard, and committed their bodies to the duſt? What preparation have you made in conſequence of the reprieve allowed you, and the admonitions given you? Hear then, once more, the joyful ſound: Believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may have life through his name. Fly to his blood, that you may obtain the forgiveneſs of your ſins, and an inheritance among them who are ſanctified. He, and none elſe is able to deliver you. Cry to him, that he may breathe upon the dry bones, and they ſhall live. Though you are hardened in profanity, though you are beſoted in ſenſuality,

ality, though earthly-mindedneſs has overſpread you like a leproſy, his right-hand and his holy arm will get him the victory. He is able to create you anew unto good works; and, as you are already monuments of his patience and forbearance, to make you to eternity the happy monuments of his ſovereign and almighty grace. Is there now any remaining objection? Is there yet any room for farther delay? Hath not time ſhed its hoary hairs upon your heads, and drawn its furrows upon your brows? Make haſte then, and fly for your lives, leſt you lie down in ſorrow, and make your bed in hell.

5. Let me preach the goſpel to the Self-righteous. By the ſelf-righteous, I mean thoſe who truſt in an outward, lifeleſs form of duties, in a character formed upon worldly prudence, and a few of the moſt common offices of civility between man and man; eſpecially thoſe, if any ſuch have perſiſted in reading this diſcourſe to the cloſe, who deſpiſe the doctrines of the grace of God. Do any of you lean to the faſhionable ſcheme of irreligious, pretended morality; and when you are at liberty, treat the doctrine of free grace, and of Chriſt's righteouſneſs and merit, with contempt and ſcorn. As the full ſoul lotheth the honeycomb, ſo the ſelf-righteous ſoul ſpurns at the riches of divine

vine mercy, and likes not the inceſſant repetition of the name of Chriſt. Your guilt is of the darkeſt and deepeſt dye. Your danger it is impoſſible to conceive or expreſs. What views have you in drawing near to a holy God in ſolemn worſhip? Or what meeting do you expect with God, when he ſitteth upon the throne of his holineſs in the day of judgment! Do you ever, tho' in the ſlighteſt manner, make conſcience of the duty of ſelf-examination? May I not have ſome hold of you by that quarter? What ſatisfaction have you in your own hearts? Dare you tell us now what paſſes there? O the power of ſelf-deceit! You would be covered with confuſion, did but the world know the foul pollution that lodges within you: how much leſs ſhall you be able to ſtand, the ſtrict and impartial judgment of the great Searcher of hearts?

Do but open the book of God, and what page will not condemn you? This ſentence ſtands uncancelled againſt you, "Curſed is every "one, that continueth not in all things that are "written in the book of the law to do them. "Out of your own mouths will you be judged, "ye wicked ſervants. Thou that makeſt thy "boaſt of the law, through breaking the law, "diſhonoureſt thou God?" Bring forth your boaſted morality, and let it be put to the trial. Will you, or dare you ſay, "I have loved the

"Lord

" Lord with all my heart, with all my ſoul, " with all my mind, and with all my ſtrength ?" Will you ſay, I have loved his worſhip, and ſerved him in public, in my family, and in ſecret, and I hope he will accept of it? I think I am authoriſed to anſwer in his name, " Was " it worſhiping me to be ſinging pſalms with " your mouths, and not once remembering " their meaning? to be thinking of an hundred " vain things when you were in the houſe of " God? To be praiſing without thankfulneſs, " confeſſing without ſorrow, and aſking bleſſings without deſiring them; and to be more " attentive to the faces and dreſſes of others " around you, than to the frame of your own " hearts? Was it hearing my word, to be " criticiſing the ſtile and manner of the ſpeaker, " and laying hold, with the utmoſt eagerneſs, " of every improper motion or ill-choſen expreſſion, as a fund of entertainment for yourſelves and your companions over your cups " and bowls? Or do you call your careleſs, " haſty, drowſy prayers, with long intermiſſions, worſhiping me in ſecret?"

But perhaps you will rather chooſe to truſt to the duties of the ſecond table, and what you owe to your neighbour. Perhaps you will ſay, I have been honeſt in all my dealings, and never wronged any man: nay, I have been kind and charitable

charitable, have dealt my bread to the hungry, and ſupplied the wants of the afflicted and poor. I anſwer, in the name of God, "Many have been "your defects even in theſe duties; but ſuppoſing "it to be ſo, you have not feared me. It might "be from pride, from fear of cenſure, from "prudence; but it was not in obedience to "me, for I was not in all your thoughts. Was it "your duty to your neighbour, to make a mock at his ſins, to lead him into intemperance, to "deſpiſe him in your hearts, and ridicule him "in your converſation?" In one word, do but examine all your "righteouſneſſes," they will "be found as filthy rags before God." Truſt not in ſuch a "refuge of lies.——The bed is "ſhorter than that a man can ſtretch himſelf on "it, and the covering narrower than that he "can wrap himſelf in it*." Believe it, there is no ſalvation in any other than in Chriſt. His atoning blood will reconcile you to God: his grace and love will captivate your ſouls: his holy and bleſſed Spirit will write his laws in your hearts. Believe in him, and you will be more holy than ever, and yet ſtand aſtoniſhed at your prophane and blind pride and vanity. He will create in you a clean heart, and you will then bluſh at the thoughts of your remaining pollution. You will apply yourſelves to his ſer-

* Iſ. xxviii. 20.

vice

vice with zeal and diligence, and yet ſtill ſay you are unprofitable ſervants. One view of the croſs of Chriſt will make ſin more odious than a thouſand fine deſcriptions of the beauty of virtue, which commonly ſerve only to nouriſh and fortify the pride of man. If ever you deſire to ſee the face of God in mercy, or to dwell in his preſence, believe in Chriſt, for there is no other *way* to the Father.

6. In the laſt place, ſuffer me to preach the goſpel to the Chief of Sinners. It is the glory of our Redeemer, that he ſaves "to the uttermoſt "all that come to God by him." The dignity of his perſon, the greatneſs of his ſufferings, and the infinite value of his atonement founded on both, makes him "mighty to ſave." Let ſuch ſinners attend to this, who are without excuſe, whoſe hearts have been a ſink of the greateſt impurity, whoſe lives are ſtained with the fouleſt and the groſſeſt crimes, whoſe ſins have been numerous, and heinous, and ſcandalous; who have no plea to offer but are ſenſible that they have juſtly merited the wrath of God in its utmoſt rigour, Let ſuch attend to this, as are trembling at the thoughts of a righteous judgment, and ſaying, "It is a fear-"ful thing to fall into the hands of the living "God.——Men and brethren, what ſhall we "do?" Behold, I bring you good tidings of

mercy unmerited, pardon unſolicited, a full and free remiſſion of all your ſins. "I have blot-"ted out thine iniquities as a cloud, and as a "thick cloud thy ſins: return unto me for I "have redeemed thee?" Receive this teſtimony, and "ſet to your ſeal that God is true."

Think not to do injury to the grace of God, by weaving a ſelf-righteous cobweb, and refuſing to believe, till you have laid down ſome rules of a new life, and effected ſome partial reformation, as if you would firſt ſave yourſelves, that you may be fit for ſalvation by Chriſt. Theſe hopes will ſoon be daſhed in pieces. Faith in the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt is the ſinner's only plea. The more vile you are in your own apprehenſion, the more need you have "to "put on Chriſt." The ſubſequent change of heart and practice muſt be the effect of his power, is a part of his purchaſe, and ought to be received as his gracious gift. And I will venture to foretel, that you will make the greater progreſs in true holineſs, the leſs you are diſpoſed to boaſt of, or to truſt in it.

This, I apprehend, is the goſpel itſelf, ſtiled in ſcripture with the higheſt propriety, the "goſpel of "the grace of God." Chriſt came "not to call "the righteous, but ſinners to repentance." If you will rely on him for ſalvation, he will ſhed abroad

abroad the love of God in your hearts by the Holy Ghoſt, which will be a powerful and operative principle of new obedience. I beſeech you therefore, in the moſt earneſt manner, not to reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves. Nothing can be more liberal, or more gracious, than the offer of the goſpel: "I will give to "him that is athirſt of the fountain of the wa-"ter of life freely." There is no ſin of ſo deep a dye, or ſo infectious a ſtain, but the blood of Chriſt is ſufficient to waſh it out. There is not any ſlave of Satan ſo loaded with chains, but he is able to ſet him free. If you periſh, it is of yourſelves. I have given you warning, from a ſincere and ardent concern for your everlaſting intereſt; and may God himſelf for Chriſt's ſake, by his Holy Spirit, effectually perſuade you to comply with it

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